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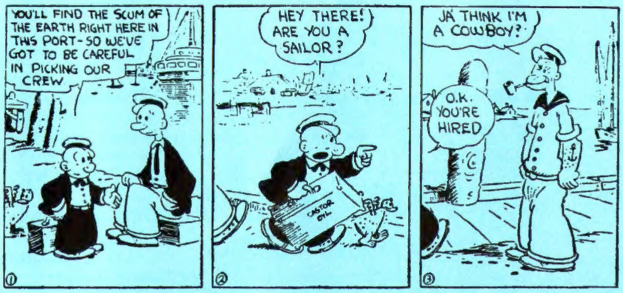
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Special Popeye Issue

No. 6
May, 1981

An Interview With
Jules Feiffer

Return of the Sensational Son of Funny Books

Don McGregor Rides Shotgun On One Eyed Sailors, Big Oil Villains, And Empty Missing Mists

Bill Blackbeard Talks About Popeye, Including Never Before Published Thimble Theatre Strips.

Marvel, DC,
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the Log of the Jolly Roger

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The Comic Times : MEDIA SHOWCASE

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Lela Dowling's

Unicorns

Portfolio

Unicorns—Lela Dowling. One of Schanes & Schanes' most successful releases of 1980 was Lela Dowling's *Dragons*. That portfolio is very nearly out of print. Lela has created a stunning companion piece, *Unicorns*, which is slated for March 1981 release. Lela Dowling is making quite a name for herself in the fantasy art field, and her captivating unicorns are her artistic forte. Each plate is rich with delicate linework and minute detail. The enchanted air of fantasy has been breathed into these scenes, which are as dynamic as the unicorns they depict. Each portfolio consists of six large plates, exactingly reproduced, packaged in a two-color illustrated folder. The edition is limited to 1,200 signed and numbered copies. Published by Schanes & Schanes. Distributed by Pacific Comics, 4887 Ronson Court, Suite E, San Diego, California 92111. $12.00 plus $1.75 postage and handling. Postage and handling $3.00 for Canadian orders, $4.00 overseas.

Schanes and Schanes

EDITORIAL

THIS ONE'S FOR YOU

Every once in a while something special emerges despite the confines and limitations of the mass media. The new *Popeye* movie is such a project. Although the film certainly possesses its flaws (the Harry Nilsson songs are among the most glaring of these), it is a sincere attempt to capture on film the unique world of E.C. Segar's *Thimble Theatre*. By tackling such a difficult task, the filmmaker's have given Segar's wonderful, whacky vision a real chance at a slice of immortality, so that it can be shared with future generations to come.

With the publication of our sixth issue, I felt that our readers deserved something a little bit different and maybe something just a little precious. If you need a justifiable reason, call it a recognition of loyal support. As far as I was concerned, I felt that it was time to do something special.

So this issue is devoted to an examination of the art of the cartoon and the comic strip, from E.C. Segar to Jules Feiffer to one of the more popular new cartoonists—Fred Hembeck.

With that goal in mind 20 plus pages of this issue have been reserved for an interview with *Popeye*'s outspoken screenwriter Jules Feiffer. The interview examines one man's view of the current state of American television, books, movies, theatre and comics in regard to his work in all of those forms. Feiffer's unique opinions and his variety of professional experiences is scrutinized in an interview which frankly, I'm quite proud to present.

This issue Don McGregor rides shotgun on *One-Eyed Sailors, Big Oil Villains and Empty, Missing Mists*. Don's review of *Popeye* is a reasoned and intelligent dissection of the film with an understanding of the original Segar material, unusual for most film critics.

In addition to an examination of another highly-touted Christmas release which was not as successful as *Popeye* (Steve Shagan's and John Avildsen's *The Formula*), Don offers a behind-the-scenes look at what it is really like to work for the major comic book companies. The *Empty, Missing Mists* portion of his column may not specifically address the "state of comic art" (to use a current catch phrase), but it does offer an insight into the nature of the business that employs most of the current comic book professionals. As an added bonus, Don has also provided the original script pages which did not appear in the first *Mist* story, so that you will be able to see what material was excerpted, as well as offering a look as to how a professional comic script is written.

In looking over the contents of this issue last month, I noticed that a factual, historical piece on *Thimble Theatre* and E.C. Segar was missing from what was being advertised as our "Special Popeye Issue." Unfortunately I was unable to rectify this situation myself (as I had only begun to appreciate Segar's work in the past two years) so I needed to commission another article to fill that gap. I found the answer to my dilemma with Bill Blackbeard's essay, *The World's First (Arf, Arf) Superhero*.

The history of the piece is a rather unique one as it was originally written for *Xero*, a fanzine published in the mid-60's by Richard Lupoff and Don Thompson. A few years later, it was included in a collection of *Xero* articles entitled *All In Color for a Dime*, which was first published in a hardcover edition and later as a mass market paperback. Despite being published in these more accessible formats, the piece has become rather obscure in recent years. So I felt it was time to present Mr. Blackbeard's definitive article to a new audience that has not had the opportunity to read his work.

Not only did Mr. Blackbeard very graciously grant me the permission to reprint the article, but he updated it with new information he had uncovered on Segar and *Thimble Theatre* as part of his becoming the curator of the San Francisco Academy of Comic Art. He has also provided all of the strips that did not appear in the *Thimble Theatre* collection he edited for Hyperion Press (because they could not be located in time for publication) and a number of never before reprinted Segar cartoons and strips pre-dating *Thimble Theatre*.

To make room for this last minute addition, a number of feature articles and regular columns had to be dropped from this issue. The articles and regular features missing from this issue will appear next month. I apologize for the necessity of this move, but I felt that Mr. Blackbeard's article was well worth including in this issue. Once you read it, I'm sure you will agree.

Rounding out the issue, is a "slush pile" submission that has made it into the magazine: Bryan Uhlenbrock's look at the work of Fred Hembeck. Since Bryan offers a concise history of Fred's sensationally short, but sweet, career, I'll let him introduce Fred to you in Bryan's article. But for all of you people who are considering submitting material, consider Bryan's article as an example that we *do* indeed read your submissions and honestly consider them.

So pull up a chair—this one's for you. Meanwhile, I'm working on number 7, which will spotlight the work of P. Craig Russell and am directing a videotape adaptation of a production of Arthur Miller's *After the Fall*. But enough of my opinions. Enjoy the issue and see you next month.

Stay loose,
Mark Gasper

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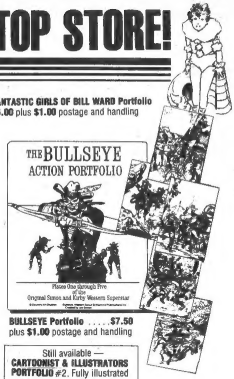

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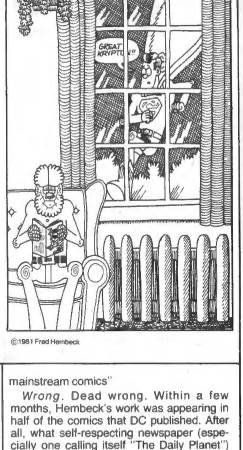
THE RETURN OF THE SON OF THE FUNNY BOOKS

An Examination of the Sensational Silliness of Fred Hembeck

by Bryan Uhlenbrock



©1981 Fred Hembeck

In the long-ago and nearly forgotten days when I first became interested in (read: dedicated to) collecting comic-books, my parents and I fought innumerable verbal battles over this newly-acquired "hobby." As the years went by, we found better things to fight about (subjects more befitting a teen-ager, at any rate) but not before I came to hold an irrational loathing for a relatively innocuous term; a term that my parents insisted upon using (despite my every argument to the contrary) to describe the entire medium of four-colored fantasy.

They called them funny books.

"But they're NOT funny." I insisted shrilly. "Look at this, one guy's punching the other guy in the face! And here, over here, some hideous fiend is about to destroy the world! How can you possibly call them funny?"

But to them a funny book was a funny book was a funny book, even if it's not particularly funny.

Well, it may have taken a while, but eventually I got over my antipathy towards funny books. Nowadays, I find myself looking forward to the occasional Impossible Man of Bat-Mite visit. They provide a much-needed relief from this, the Marvel Age of Clenched Teeth. When the comic doldrums hit, an issue of *Sugar & Spike* is a blessing.

There's only one problem. DC doesn't print *Sugar & Spike* any more. I hate to say it, but it's true: "they just don't make funny books like they use 'ta."

Oh, the latest Beast/Wonder Man exchange may produce a chuckle from time-to-time . . .I'm sure there's even someone out there who finds humor in Spider-Man's wise-guy dialogue . . .but for every light-hearted Plastic Man, super herodom holds a half-dozen Reed Richardses, Thors, and Sub-Mariners; each one more pompous than the next. "What about Howard the Duck?" you may ask. Well, even at his best, Howard was never truly funny. Dark satire was his forte; laughter through the tears. With the virtual disappearance of everything but Marvel or DC from the nation's comics racks, the funny book seems well on its way to extinction.

Ladies and gentlemen, comics fans of all ages . . .allow me to introduce Fred G. Hembeck. He does funny books. In fact, if my suspicions are correct, Fred Hembeck may well be . . .(a flash of lightning would be appropriate here; the house lights grow dim and the soundtrack underscores the growing tension) . . .the SON of the funny books!

My first contact with the wacky world of Hembeck was in the pages of *Ironman* 112. Under the unlikely heading of "Still More PRINTED CIRCUITS: And Now For Something Completely Different . . ." appeared the most colorful letter of comment of all time. It was a charming mixture of the superheroic and the "Bigfoot" schools of comic art, with a liberal dose of fannish chit-chat thrown in for good measure. It was midway between parody and plaudit, in six playful panels. It was neither fish nor fowl nor any other beast I had ever seen, and it was signed Fred G. Hembeck. "Interesting," I thought at the time, "the kid's got style. Too bad they'll never find a place for him in mainstream comics"

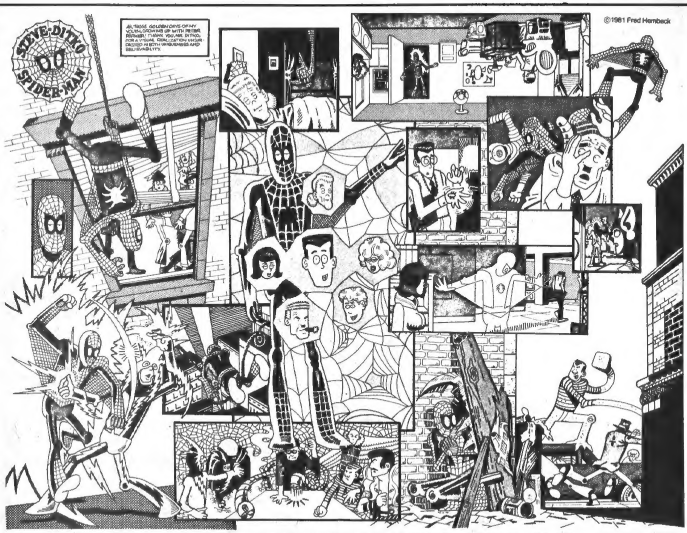
Wrong. Dead wrong. Within a few months, Hembeck's work was appearing in half of the comics that DC published. After all, what self-respecting newspaper (especially one calling itself "The Daily Planet") would go to press without a comic strip? Bob ("Perry") Rozakis' scandal sheet, intended as the DC version of Marvel's *Bullpen Bulletins* page, put weekly doses of Hembeck Humor alongside dry recitations of the DC comics currently on sale, absurd Q&A sessions with the Answer Man, and space-wasting crossword puzzles. Is it any wonder Freddy became a superstar so quickly? Anything would look entertaining when juxtaposed with a thousand variations upon "Q: How much is MIGHTY MUCK #53 worth? A: 30¢ in good condition."

Hembeck's run in "The Daily Planet" quickly put the "gag" back in the "gag strip." You'd have never thought that Superman or the Flash would have a taste for puns, but under FGH's direction the whole DC cosmos became a veritable Legion of Super-Humorists — an army of Rodney Dangerfields in funny costumes, with *none* of them getting any respect.

Picture Perry White as the cook in a restaurant. Jimmy Olsen's reaction? "Great Casesar's Salad!" Alas, Perry can only reply: "And don't call me *chef*!" Get the idea? Like I said, no respect.

They *did* get plenty of laughs, though, and before long it was obvious that space limitations were restricting Hembeck's rather twisted imagination. In early 1979 Eclipse Enterprises (up 'til now a sober, serious outfit), published *Hembeck — The Best of Dateline:* ✔!!?#.

"Dateline: ✔!!?#.? *Vas ist das Dateline*



A tribute to the co-creator of Spider-Man, Steve Ditko. Excerpted from *Hembeck*.

✓!!?#?"

According to the best indications, Dateline ✓!!?# is a one-page column that has been appearing in *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom* since late 1977 which predates even the infamous *iron Man* letter. We can only hope that someday all of these columns will be collected in one gigantic volume. Otherwise, who knows what Hembeck Homilies will be lost to the ages?

At any rate, *Best of Dateline: ✓!!?#* was quickly followed by *Hembeck 1980*, which was in turn followed by *Abbott & Costello Meet the Bride of Hembeck*. These last two were published by Fantaco Enterprises Inc. rather than Eclipse. Evidently the Mullaneys came to their senses after their first foray into the fun-filled world of Fred Hembeck. Fantaco is also responsible for the appearance of *Smilin' Ed Comics*, (which featured a short piece by Hembeck, entitled "The Dog") as well as Fred's latest offering: *Bah, Hembeck*. You'd think they'd have learned their lesson by now.

"You must realize that, as heroic as they may be, these are one large bunch of absurd characters. In their regular adventures, the vast potential for silliness isn't even scratched! So, I take it upon myself to right this wrong . . ."

This, in forty words or less, is Fred Hembeck's approach to his material, as enunciated by Cartoon Fred in *Abbott & Costello Meet the Bride of Hembeck*. Fred, y'see, interacts with his subject matter in a way no other cartoonist dares; — "up close and personal," to coin a phrase. He puts himself on paper, microphone in hand, and does the Howard Cosell routine with superheroes instead of athletes.

By putting himself, symbolically, on the same level as the victims of his rapier wit (something Cosell could never do), Hembeck accomplishes two important things. First, he demonstrates the depth of his immersion in popular culture. These characters are literally a part of his life, and he a part of theirs. Any criticism, any amount of ridicule he may heap upon them is therefore done out of love, rather than malice. Additionally, he makes himself the potential butt of every joke, thereby diffusing any anger or resentment some may feel over his cavalier treatment of this or that favorite character. We are laughing with both Fred *and* the character, rather than with Fred *at* the character. More often than not, in fact, we are laughing *with* Fred, *at* Fred. Witness the instances of Fred "doing the Corporal Klinger bit" by appearing in the costumes of both Wonder Woman and Red Sonja, or Fred being stampeded by "every cartoonist's nightmare" — the entire Legion of Super-Heroes. Of particular interest is the sequence wherein Fred Contemplates suicide by various imaginative methods because of an "attractive blonde woman" (a total stranger) and her disdain for his choice of reading material: "funny books." It must be noted that this is perhaps the only time that Hembeck uses that hated term. Comic books are invariably refered to as comic books throughout the rest of his work.

Make no doubt about it, Hembeck is thoroughly versed in the lore and legend of funny books — and equally cognizant of his readers' concerns. He picks and chooses

his material accordingly, skipping blithely from discussions of sexism in comics to *Strange Adventures* retrospectives. He resurrects gone-and-nearly forgotten characters like Herbie, the Fat Fury and Ultra, the Multi-Alien for the sheer job of drawing them once. He rhapsodizes over Simon & Kirby's Fighting American and Michael Gilbert's Wraith with all the enthusiasm of a ten-year-old reading his first copy of *Superman*.

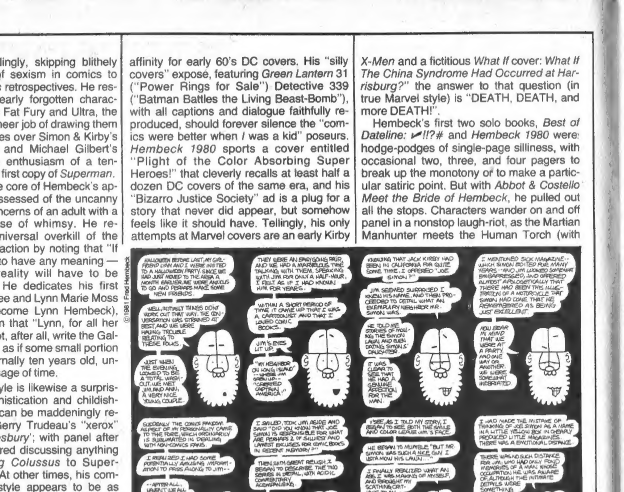
This, I think, is the core of Hembeck's appeal. He seems possessed of the uncanny ability to mix the concerns of an adult with a ten-year-old's sense of whimsy. He responds to the omniversal overkill of the "Fictional Reality" faction by noting that "If reality in comics is to have any meaning — first comics and reality will have to be straightened out." He dedicates his first book to both Stan Lee and Lynn Marie Moss (who has since become Lynn Hembeck), with the observation that "Lynn, for all her many virtues, did not, after all, write the Galactus Trilogy." It is as it some small portion of Him remains eternally ten years old, untouched by the passage of time.

His cartooning style is likewise a surprising mixture of sophistication and childishness. At times, he can be maddeningly repetitive, recalling Gerry Trudeau's "xerox" approach to *Doonesbury*; with panel after panel of Cartoon Fred discussing anything from *It, the Living Colossus* to Superman — The Movie. At other times, his comfortable "Bigfoot" style appears to be as serviceable as anything that the comic strip syndicates foist off on the nation's newspapers under the guise of "humor" strips. His drawing style is far cleaner (and more professional-looking) than that of, say, Cathy Guisewite, who enjoys nationwide exposure thanks to the Universal Press Syndicate.

But it is in his full page and double page homages to favorite artists that Hembeck's talent as a cartoonist is most clearly evident. When Hembeck mixes his own distinctive art style with those of comics legends like Kirby, Ditko, Infantino and Bob Kane (the latter via underrated ghost Dick Sprang) the result is a product both fresh with new insight and unmistakably nostalgic. His Kirby/Hembeck hybrid is somewhat more effective on the Fighting America page than on the one dedicated to Captain America (reflecting, perhaps, Fred's glee at villains like Commissars Rimski and Khorsakoff or Yuscha Liftso Long), but his Ditko tributes (the centerpieces of both *Best of Dateline: ✔!!?#* and *Hembeck 1980*, spotlighting the Spider-Man and Dr. Strange are frighteningly accurate. His attempt to reconcile Carmine Infantino's fluid style with his own more rigid approach is perhaps the least satisfying of the bunch, but his Bob Kane is truly astounding. Kane's bizarre yet solid style fits Hembeck like a glove. Fred has struck satiric gold here, and it is a vein that he is to mine with great success in *Smilin' Ed*, with *"The Dog"*.

Hembeck also seems to have a special affinity for early 60's DC covers. His "silly covers" expose, featuring *Green Lantern* 31 ("Power Rings for Sale") Detective 339 ("Batman Battles the Living Beast-Bomb"), with all captions and dialogue faithfully reproduced, should forever silence the "comics were better when I was a kid" poseurs. *Hembeck 1980* sports a cover entitled "Plight of the Color Absorbing Super Heroes!" that cleverly recalls at least half a dozen DC covers of the same era, and his "Bizarro Justice Society" ad is a plug for a story that never did appear, but somehow feels like it should have. Tellingly, his only attempts at Marvel covers are an early Kirby *X-Men* and a fictitious *What If* cover: *What If The China Syndrome Had Occurred at Harrisburg?"* the answer to that question (in true Marvel style) is "DEATH, DEATH, and more DEATH!".

Hembeck's first two solo books, *Best of Dateline: ✔!!?#* and *Hembeck 1980* were: hodge-podges of single-page silliness, with occasional two, three, and four pagers to break up the monotony or to make a particular satiric point. But with *Abbot & Costello Meet the Bride of Hembeck*, he pulled out all the stops. Characters wander on and off panel in a nonstop laugh-riot, as the Martian Manhunter meets the Human Torch (with


I WATCHED SICK MAGAZINE! WHICH REMINDS ME-FOR HOW MANY YEARS HAVE WE LOOKED BEFORE EMBARRASSED AND OFFERED AUNTY ANN'S BOTTOM? WHY THERE'S A HISTORICAL PRECEDENT FOR THIS! A HISTORICAL PRECEDENT SARAH, HAD COME THAT WE EMBARRASSED IN FRONT OF AUNTY ANN'S BOTTOM? JUST EXCELLENT!
YOU DRAW WORSE THAN ANYONE I'VE EVER SEEN! I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GET A PRINT MADE OF ANOTHER ARTIST'S WORK TO BE INSPIRED!
I HAD MADE THIS INSTEAD OF A LITTLE TRIBUTE TO A FAMILY MEMBER WHO HAD RECENTLY PASSED AWAY. IT PROVOKED LITTLE IMAGINING.
THERE WAS A HUMAN DISTANCE THAT WAS NOT ONLY A REFLECTION OF THE DYNAMICS OF A MAN KNOWING HIMSELF AND HIS CONDITION, BUT ALTHOUGH THE INTIMATE NATURE OF THE PIECE, I DON'T THINK IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOT TO BE PUBLISHED.
SO DO I, DEAR, I SO DO I.
I'LL DO YOU ONE BETTER, SARAH-SUE! COME OVER TO MY PLACE AND I'LL DRAW YOU A PICTURE OF MYSELF!
SARAH-SUE WAKES HIS MARDI AU CHAIS IN THE PANTIES AND FATTIES! PAINFULLY TRUE PANEL OF ARTIST-WRITER JACK KIRBY!
SARAH SUE'S A WRITER! ARTIST-WRITER CAN HOLD HER OWN!
SINCE KIRBY'S STYLE WAS VERY SIMILAR TO MINE ANYWAY, I GUESS I MAY HAVE BEEN REFLECTING HIS STYLE!
SHE'S A SWEET GIRL! I'M SURE SHE'LL BE HAPPY TO SIT FOR MY BOOK OF PIN-UP PORTRAITS!
I'M PAINTING A PORTRAIT OF EVERY ONE OF JACK'S GIRL-FRIENDS IN THIS BOOK!
SO WHY DON'T YOU DRAW HER AS A LIVE WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR A MARVEL STORY?
I'M DRAWING THINGS GENRAL CRANKY WHICH BUT IF A GOOD ONE CAN BE MADE FROM HER THOMAS LEE DE WILLIAM
AND THERE'S ALWAYS A PLACE IN MY HEART FOR A GOOD MARY JANE STORY!
I'M ROLL!
AS HUMBLE AS I AM BEFORE THE MIGHTY KIRBY, I'M NOT ABOVE TAKING A SHOT AT HIS FOIBLES!
I'M NOT SURE IF I'M SUPPOSED TO BE LAUGHING OR CRYING!
I'M NOT SURE EVEN NOW WHAT THE HELL TO MAKE OF THIS!
I'M TORN BETWEEN LAUGHING AND CRYING!
I'M TORN BETWEEN SOMETHING AND SOMETHING ELSE!
I'M TORN!
I'M TORN!
I'M TORN

the inevitable result: J'Onn J'Onzz keels over when Johnny Storm demonstrates his super-power), Jonah Hex meets Archie ("consarned *comics code's* taken all the fight outta young'uns nowadays. Turned 'em inta fidgety neurotics . . ."), and Abbot & Costello (who "truly introduced" Hembeck to "zaniness") do indeed meet Lynn Marie, the bride of Hembeck. Special guest-stars include the Watcher, Marlon Brando and Elvis Costello ("the new wave rock and roller . . . he makes being depressed inspirational!"), whom Fred introduces to Bud Abbott when Lou Costello quits the team in a dispute over billing. "What's Abbott without Costello?" Fred asks, while the rest of us wonder, "what's a relatively nice guy like Elvis doing in a comic book like this?" These and other meaningful questions (did Jim Mooney *really* draw Supergirl in the nude?) are answered in the pages of *Abbott & Costello Meet the Bride of Hembeck*.

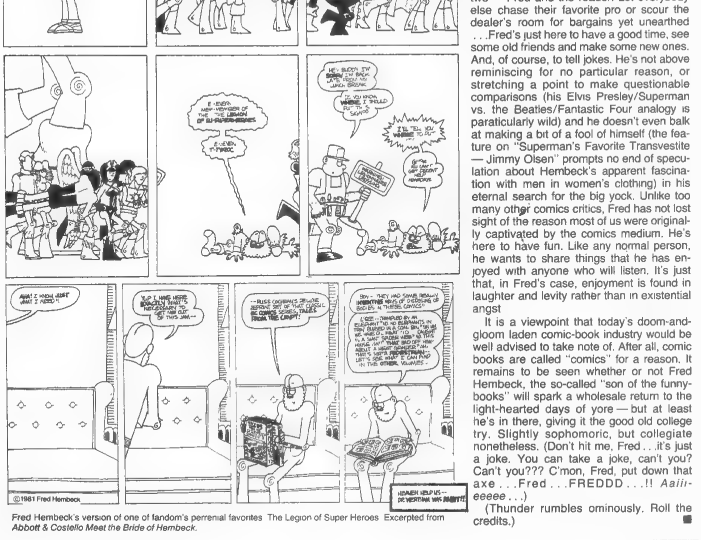
"The Dog" is 10 solid pages of punch lines, Ralph Rowlf, millionaire and Bruce Wayne clone-about-town, was evidently playing with the family pooch when he decided that criminals are a cowardly, superstitious lot; for when night falls, the debonair Ralph Rowlf becomes that "Paper-trained Purveyor of Propriety" — The Dog! With his daring young sidekick — Pup, the Kanine Kid (in reality Bart Barc, professional orphan) — the Dog is out to put the bite on crime, along with any other cliche he might sniff out. The Dog's sole weakness, it should be noted, is a rolled-up newspaper.

The back cover of *Smilin' Ed 1* promised that Hembeck's next work would be something called *Zany* . . . but Fred evidently decided to postpone *Zany* long enough to provide his riotus readership with a Christmas present of sorts. The front cover of *Bah, Hembeck* features the unmasking of Doctor Doom (in true Fantastic Four tradition, complete with an ersatz *FF* logo) — who stands revealed as none other than Fred himself. With this magazine, Fred is unmasked a bit as he reveals more of himself than he had in the previous three books combined.

He also shows why, no matter how much money he may make (or not make) off of his artwork, Fred Hembeck will now and forever be known as a "fan artist." He is first and foremost a comics fan. His books are like little mini-conventions with an attendance of two — Fred and the reader. Let everybody else chase their favorite pro or scour the dealer's room for bargains yet unearthed . . .Fred's just here to have a good time, see some old friends and make some new ones. And, of course, to tell jokes. He's not above reminiscing for no particular reason, or stretching a point to make questionable comparisons (his Elvis Presley/Superman vs. the Beatles/Fantastic Four analogy is paraticularly wild) and he doesn't even balk at making a bit of a fool of himself (the feature on "Superman's Favorite Transvestite — Jimmy Olsen" prompts no end of speculation about Hembeck's apparent fascination with men in women's clothing) in his eternal search for the big yock. Unlike too many other comics critics, Fred has not lost sight of the reason most of us were originally captivated by the comics medium. He's here to have fun. Like any normal person, he wants to share things that he has enjoyed with anyone who will listen. It's just that, in Fred's case, enjoyment is found in laughter and levity rather than in existential angst

It is a viewpoint that today's doom-and-gloom laden comic-book industry would be well advised to take note of. After all, comic books are called "comics" for a reason. It remains to be seen whether or not Fred Hembeck, the so-called "son of the funnybooks" will spark a wholesale return to the light-hearted days of yore — but at least he's in there, giving it the good old college try. Slightly sophomoric, but collegiate nonetheless. (Don't hit me, Fred . . .it's just a joke. You can take a joke, can't you? Can't you??? C'mon, Fred, put down that axe . . . Fred . . . FREDDD . . . !! *Aaiii-eeeee . . .*)

(Thunder rumbles ominously. Roll the credits.) ■



Fred Hembeck's version of one of fandom's perrenial favorites: The Legion of Super Heroes. Excerpted from *Abbott & Costello Meet the Bride of Hembeck*.

IN THE WAKE OF THE NEW WAVE: THE RETURN OF THE SONG

A friend and I recently agreed that the label "new wave" is about ready for obsolescence. The sensibility of the best work of the last few years is widespread now. "It's just rock and roll again," my friend said, and I agreed, but in doing so I realized that "'new' wave" was a clumsy appellation all along. The most recent wave washed over the Rock but it did not drown it like another Atlantis. Instead it washed something ashore that's been lost for quite some time.

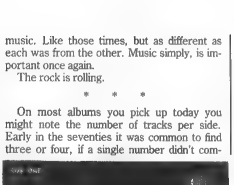
Consider some impressions your senses might've registerd over the last half-decade. There were the kids in leather with safety pins in their ears. The dance floors were still populated but no longer by clones in platform shoes, glitter, and enough jewelery to offset the National Debt. The conquest of the fashion industry by the jean. Music over: a "hot rod" style—stripped to barest musical essentials of instrumentation and melody, fine tuned to run fast over the short course, and run loud.

Don't make judgements, just consider the above: what I detect is a fluid (even mercurial) musical scene. The disco that preceded it was a pattern in essence. The L.A. Establishment of the early seventies was about out of surprises. In the last few years popular music's become *popular* again, in that *people* are involved with it, not just listening but hearing; moreover, participating. Like in the fifties when rock and roll freed the people from banality. Like when the counter-culture of the sixties grounded a whole new society in their music. Like those times, but as different as each was from the other. Music simply, is important once again.

The rock is rolling.

* * *

On most albums you pick up today you might note the number of tracks per side. Early in the seventies it was common to find three or four, if a single number didn't comprise the entire half. Today's albums rarely total fewer than ten songs, and in the case of Elvis Costello's *Get Happy* that is per side. The last wave swept the song, that two-to-four minute self-contained entity, back to prominence in pop music.



The artists below all have different ideas of what a song can do. You've got your muckrakers, your impressionists, and of course your entertainers. Each has achieved at least a limited success. I've sampled new artists, some of more established reputation, and a few old-timers who've found a new format for their abilities.

To wit:

Joe Jackson *Beat Crazy* (A&M). Jackson's recording career began in 1978 with the album *Look Sharp!* He followed Elvis Costello much like the Dave Clark Five had followed the Beatles on a earlier wave. An early song, "Fools In Love", began note for note, instrument for instrument, the same as Costello's "Watching The Detectives." Jackson emulated the "angry young man" pose as well, but even on that relatively primitive debut he demonstrated traces of a personal vision. For one thing his keyboard-based compositions were more melodic than early Costello, and throughout Jackson's work were bits of humor that tempered the rage. He seemed to have a commercial bent that he couldn't quite stifle. On his excellent second album *I'm The Man* he subtitled a couple of very enjoyable numbers "pop songs" parenthetically. It was as if he was demanding that the rest of the material be taken for more.

On *Beat Crazy* he's taken what might be the next logical step. He's (self-) consciously left any sense of exuberance out of the work. Approach this as you might a lesson, and not one from your favorite teacher. Even before you listen, the liner notes tell you that this record is "an attempt to make sense of rock and roll." He asks, "Did we succeed?" And then, "Why did we even try?" I would answer, *No*; and *I don't know, why?*

The melodies and involving rhythms that Jackson has proved capable of have been replace largely with repeating riffs. Starting at bottom there's the infamously reviewed "Bat-

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tleground." It's not really a song, just some percussive "noodling" over which Jackson recites his lyric, an unclever "poem" built around the word "nigger." It's a platform where a song should be.

Shifting to the best material at hand there's the title song and one called "Biology." "Beat Crazy" features vocals on the verses by bassist Graham Maby, which are smoother than Jackson's wont. He glides above the incessant rhythms like a balloon over hot air (no slight intended) in rising and falling tones that create whatever melody the song has. It's a striking contrast with Jackson's staccato styling on the chorus, and the counterpoint reinforces the song's message, about the conflicting stimuli fed to people by modern culture, from "brylcreme" to "Jesus freaks."

"Biology" is saved by the wit of its lyric, and has at least one or two hooks to catch the ear. The singer tells his girl it's just "Biology" that's responsible for his infidelities, not his feelings about her. She thanks him for the information, glad that now she won't have to worry about "Dave and Tony and Phil and James."

Fellow lyric mavens (assuming I have any) will be disappointed by the rest of the songs. The best of them are saved by superior rhythms and arrangements, many borrowed from earlier Jackson tunes. "The Evil Eye" could be "Geraldine and John" from *Look Sharp!*, except for the words. "Crime Doesn't Pay" is a good semi-instrumental that could've done without the insipid lyrics. That and "Fit" (an ode to drag queens and others who don't quite belong) show signs that the composer's style is developing, despite the large state of arrest present here.

Jackson might do well by re-enlisting former producer David Kershenbaum. The man needs an editor. He needs to fix a direction. He needs to best utilize his talents. Most of all he needs to know when he's said enough.

* * *

Polyrock (RCA). In an experimental style this first album from a group originally out of Bayside, Queens, takes an approach I haven't completely come to appreciate. It's a dehumanized system of songwriting, singing and playing, owing obvious debt to David Byrne of the Talking Heads. Style is the final message here, music the medium: what comes out is less important than *how* it comes out. Or am I prejudiced?

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Polyrock considers itself an "electric dance band." It features not a bass player, but a manipulator of a "bass machine." Leaders Billy and Tommy Robertson have written the material, and it all conforms to the style called "minimalism" (the limiting, often-to extremes, of harmony and melody), concentrating on a deliberately repetetive rhythmic structure.

In this limited framework, enough must happen to keep the ear interested, and the rest of the body involved. Not one track here fails to entice some part of the anatomy to some kind of motion, so in this sense the narrowing of focus is successful; the band goes right where it wants to. Not to the mind; but for best effect maybe the mind should be left out of this.

The human voice is another instrument here, one secondary to the keyboards and guitars. Some songs have no words, other vocal tracks that can hardly be distinguished, the rest lyrics that seem more gibberish than imagistic, as they must have been intended. Billy Robertson claims he tries for "something spontaneous" when he writes, but the album's very technical precision suggests programming over spontaneity. As the lyrics seem rather slipshod, a listener might get the idea that words are not important to Robertson. Which is his right, though I disagree.

Mostly voice is pitted against instrument to give the impression of man versus machine. On side one, in "Go West," "Green For Go", and "Romantic Me", the sustained rhythms finally seem to beat the vocals down. Guest vocalist Catherine Oblasney fares better on "Your Dragging Feet" and "This Song." On the first her soprano hummings serve nearly percussively, filling spaces between beats and providing some welcome variety from the usual hypnotic pattern. On the latter her voice overlays the dance music track with an ethereal melodic moaning that stays in the memory long after the record's finished.

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She's used less effectively on side two, on "Shut Your Face." She's a lesser instrument in a good instrumental. Elsewhere on "Body Me" and "Sound Alarm" the otherwise dominant keyboards lay back for a while. Guitars and percussion interplay, and these numbers include more changes in time and pattern. But in each the entrance of the keyboards toward the end is restricting, signals to introduce repetition.

There is a definite and sustained style at work here. The group and producer Philip Glass, the avant-garde composer, know what they want to do. They might be the missing link between (ugh) disco and the future, purveyors of dancable, essentially mindless music created with a deft technological touch. As the technology improves the mind someday might be altogether surpassable, and the result would be an irresistable dance music. Could that be the next "new wave"?

I for one hope not.

* *

Taxxi *Day For Night* (Fantasy). Taxxi, a new band begun in England and now based in Portland, Oregon, is dedicated to the finely-crafted pop song. That is one that's brief, immediately engaging, to the point, filled with hooks, crisp arrangements and bright vocals. Funk and reggae color the material, but you can find bits from the whole history of rock and roll if you listen closely.

Vocalist and guitarist David Cumming contributes two songs. Both are pure examples of the English school of pop composing. "Walking Wounded" is a straight medium-heavy metal of mid-Kinks vintage, energized by a guitar line doesn't digress to histrionics but moves matters directly from beginning to end. "You're So Pretty" shows hints of both the Mersey and Tottenham (Dave Clark's) sound. A medium tempo, a singalong chorus rendered with rich harmony. It's a delight.

Colin Payne and Jeffrey Nead wrote seven of the eight remaining songs. "Starting All Over Again", a cover of a Mel Tim hit, is pleasant if not up to the original. Payne and Nead show more varied precedents in their compositions than partner Cumming. Payne composes the music. He was once a member of Britain's successful reggae band Trax, so unsurprisingly reggae, ska, and African rhythms can be heard here and there. But he's attempted and achieved more variety. There's a soulful ballard ("Cold Night", complete with strings and plaintive vocal); some stylized hard rock ("American Made"); and best of all "Not Me Girl", the kind of song that used to be a hit. It almost sings itself, the listener knows what's coming without a lyric sheet (thoughtfully provided nevertheless). "Reflections" and "Stranger" are good in the "mixed-bag" approach, where pieces of almost anything can be found.

Weakest is "Rich Bitch", an attempt at angry heavy metal that seems technically proficient but isn't convincing; Cumming and the band as a whole aren't angry enough. Next to worse, though not bad, is "Sex and Suburban Suicide." Its reggaeish melody is too spare and a bit repetitive. The rest of the Nead/

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Payne collaborations seem to fit Nead's unpretentious words to his partner's music. Here the melody seems to have been applied to a difficult lyrical structure. Whichever, words and music intrude upon one another to an extent.

These would be slight defects in any record. For a debut album they're incidental. This is one of the most consistent *and* one of the most enjoyable records I've ever heard.

* *

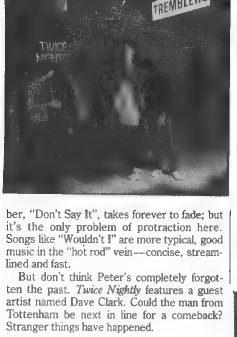
The Tremblers *Twice Nightly* (Johnston). Remember Herman's Hermits? Herman, a.k.a. Peter Noone, is back with a new aggregation and he's timely now as he was way back when. In fact the Tremblers seem more truly Noone's band than the Hermits (neé Heartbeats) ever were. He produced the album. He wrote or co-wrote all the material but for the semi-obligatory Elvis Costello cover ("Green Shirt"). The songs were published by Peter Noone Music.

Herman was a music hall entertainer out of vaudeville tradition, strutting and clowning in front of the band, projecting boyish sentiment in songs like "Mrs. Brown You've Got A Lovely Daughter" and "I'm Into Something Good." Sincere innocence backed with strings and lush production made "There's A Kind Of Hush" (all over the world) nearly believeable. It was a boy's world, and Herman was the "ideal" boy—just ask Gloria Stavers, editor of *16 Magazine*.

It ain't like that anymore, though Peter looks not one whit older than Herman. Boys these days, whether they know more or less than they used to, talk like they've done it all. They talk tough, even the nice guys: *They told me that the nice guy will always finish last/But this nice guy is really going to get a blast!/Cos now have I got a big surprise for them/Woo am I going to open their eyes for them/They won't believe it* ("I'll Be Taking Her Out Tonight.").

Noone's themes are perenially adolescent: having a good time despite authority; begging her to give it up for the first time; complaining about the old man. But "You Can't Do That", "Steady Eddy", and "Dad Said" are devoid of softer musical or lyrical sentiment. They demand, cajole and bitch. Herman's veddy British tenor practices some vocal pyrotechnics encompassing shrieks, moans, hisses and growls. The Hermits' loosely blended guitar/bass/drum accompaniment won't do here: there's a tight mix of instruments including a variety of keyboards that surge forward at breakneck speed, somehow making the youthful bravado more believable.

This album never slows, and rarely slackens. The moments of slack are the weakest—pieces of "Little Lover" and "I Screamed Anne" lose momentum and undermine the aggressive thrust the songs need. The last num-



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ber, "Don't Say It", takes forever to fade; but it's the only problem of protraction here. Songs like "Wouldn't I" are more typical, good music in the "hot rod" vein—concise, streamlined and fast.

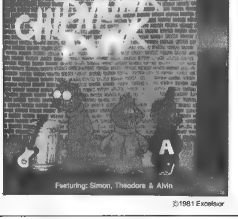
But don't think Peter's completely forgotten the past. *Twice Nightly* features a guest artist named Dave Clark. Could the man from Tottenham be next in line for a comeback? Stranger things have happened.

* * *

Alvin, Theodore and Simon *Chipmunk Punk* (Excelsior). You were asking, "Like what?" These three guys were not among those I'd expected to hear from again. But like all troupers they go with the times; Alvin picked up the safety pin and put it through his sweater. They're almost a Chipmunk Brothers Band here: Alvin on lead guitar, Simon bass, Theodore drums. And their voices...well, the same as ever.

Only these guys could take material from sources diverse as Blondie, Queen and Billy Joel and make them their own. As a matter of fact after a certain number of listenings the songs all begin to sound alike. It's probably why Alvin and company can't keep an audience too long and have to keep on making these comebacks.

This is clever parody to a point, a good album for a party or a nostalgia session. It's a fair new wave sampler: "Call Me", "Let's Go", "You May Be Right", "My Sharona" and others. It might be fun for children. But most adults, fortunately or not, have outgrown the Chipmunks. For what it's worth, my advice to Chipmunk fans would be to forego this one and pick up their Christmas album. Once a year they're a delight.



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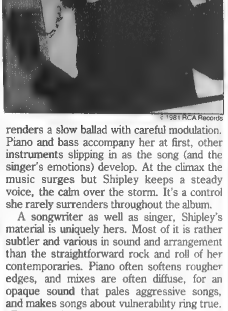
* * *

Ellen Shipley *Breaking Through The Ice Age* (RCA). I couldn't go without paying some attention to one of the females washed up by the last wave. Shipley is one of the better artists among them. On her second album she's versatile in both original and interpretative fashions. At various times she does Pat Benatar ("Heart To Heart"), Deborah Harry ("Living For The Tenderness") and the 'girl group' sound ("This Little Girl"). Her voice is as malleable as Benatar's, but she makes better use of it—when she changes her style she changes her sound.

She's less strident than most of the newer rockettes. On "Lost Without Your Love" she



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renders a slow ballad with careful modulation. Piano and bass accompany her at first, other instruments slipping in as the song (and the singer's emotions) develop. At the climax the music surges but Shipley keeps a steady voice, the calm over the storm. It's a control she rarely surrenders throughout the album.

A songwriter as well as singer, Shipley's material is uniquely hers. Most of it is rather subtler and various in sound and arrangement than the straightforward rock and roll of her contemporaries. Piano often softens rougher edges, and mixes are often diffuse, for an opaque sound that pales aggressive songs, and makes songs about vulnerability ring true. "Fotogenic" exemplifies the former as "Lost Without Your Love" does the latter.

Shipley could, and should, follow Harry and Benatar to greater success. That is, if talent is enough.

* * *

NOTES

The **John Lennon** memorial issue of **Rolling Stone** (#335) was not displayed in many stores due to its controversial cover photo of a nude John embracing Yoko. Anyone who wishes can obtain a copy by sending three dollars to 6 Commercial Street, Hicksville, NY 11801...**Peter Frampton** hopes to re-energize his career with a new album produced by **David Kershenbaum**, formerly with **Joe Jackson**...On December 29 of last year another pop music figure was lost in the death of folk singer/songwriter **Tim Hardin** ("If I Were A Carpenter", "Misty Roses"). More recently rock and roll pioneer **Bill Haley** also died...Rumors of a **Knack** breakup denied by the band...A different rumor, of a reunion album by **Paul McCartney, George Harrison**, and **Ringo Starr**, in tribute to **John Lennon**, were also denied by McCartney and Starr. Seems it's just the two of them who'll be working together with former **Beatles** producer George Martin, and the sessions were planned well before Christmas...A quite-charming **Elvis Costello** on the **Tomorrow** show in January lived down his surly image joking with **Tom Snyder**. The audience broke up more than once. ■

NEW AND UPCOMING RELEASES

A&M: Rita Coolidge, *Greatest Hits*; Atlantic Starr, *Radiant*; *Doc Holliday*; *Patrick D. Martin* (A&M/IRS); *Passage*; Hazel O'Connor, *Sons And Lovers*; Dennis Brown, *Foul Play*; Ali Thomson, *Deception Is An Art*; Quincy Jones, *The Dude*; Squeeze, *Eastside Story*; Stanley Frank, *Play It Till It Hurts*; *Yellow Magic Orchestra*; *Live Wire*; Brenda Russell, *Love Life*; John Cale, *Honi Soit*; Chuck Mangione, *Tarantella*; Peter Frampton, *Breaking All The Rules*; *Split Enz.*

Arista: The Outlaws, *Ghost Riders*; Alan Parsons, *The Turn Of A Friendly Card*; Aretha Franklin, *Aretha.*

Atlantic: Nicolette Larson, *Radio Land.*

Bearsville: Todd Rundgren, *Healing.*

CBS: Earth, Wind and Fire, *Faces*; The Clash, *Sandinista*; Toto, *Turn Back*; Boomtown Rats, *Mondo Bongo.*

Elektra: Lenny White, *Twennynine*; Manfred Mann's Earth Band, *Dance*; *Flash Gordon* Soundtrack.

Mercury: The Gap Band III; Con Funk Shun, *Touch.*

RCA: Grace Slick, *Welcome To The Wrecking Ball*; Don McLean, *Chain Lightning*; Dolly Parton, *'9 to 5' and Odd Jobs*; Elvis Presley, *Guitar Man*; Jorma Kaukonen, *Vital Parts*; Shalamar, *Three For Love*; The Whispers, *Imagination*; Lakeside, *Fantastic Voyage.*

Warner Bros.: Emmylou Harris, *Evangeline*; Pearl Harbour, *Don't Follow Me, I'm Lost Too*; Eddie Rabitt, *Horizon*; Fleetwood Mac, *Live*; Rod Stewart, *Foolish Behaviour*; Steve Winwood, *Arc Of A Diver.*

THE VIEW FROM NEW YORK

A major controversy has begun to surround Sir Richard Attenborough's film on the life of Mahatma Gandhi which is currently shooting on location in India. The major objection is that an Englishman is making the film in India with not only the consent of the government, but with its financial blessing as well (to the tune of $7 million). Questions are asked daily in the Indian Parliament about the costs and direction of the film, as protests are registered by Indian filmmakers who are incensed that the Indian Government should be investing so heavily in what is primarily a foreign film, while they are forced to scramble for any sort of financing.

An angry group of letter writers addressed their outrage to *Patriot*, a left-wing newspaper charging that Britain and the United States, "have hatched a conspiracy to rob us of our cultural and historical heritage and trade it for profit, as they once did with our tiger skins, elephant tusks, antiques and temple idols."

For nearly two decades Attenborough (who's directing credits include *A Bridge Too Far* and *Young Winston*) has tried in vain to get this project off the ground. Now that he has finally succeeded, he fully intends to see the film through to its completion no matter what negative sentiment and protest he encounters.

Jawaharlal Nehru (perhaps Gandhi's closest political associate) when he read the film's screenplay, had advised Attenborough to present a full portrait of the non-violent revolutionary who led his people out from under the yoke of British imperialism. According to Sir Richard, Nehru had advised him that Gandhi, "had all the frailties, and all the shortcomings. Give us that. In your film, do not deify him. He was too great a man to be a god."

Attenborough plans to show what he feels to be (based on historical evidence) Gandhi's discontent with the results of his revolution and his teachings as well as the leader's triumphs. The screenplay which is written by Gerald Hanley,

Ben Kingsley, formerly of the Royal Shakespere Company is playing the title role of *Gandhi*.

Robert Bolt (who became too ill to complete the project) and Jack Briley is based on the biography by Louis Fischer *Gandhi*. According to Attenborough, it does not classify Gandhi as a saint or a hollow idol rife with contradictions, but approaches him as an identifiable human being.

★ ★ ★

Part of the Reagan Administration's proposed new fiscal policy is a massive budget cut to the arts and humanities endowments. The proposed cuts being touted by David Stockman, the director of the Office of Management and Budget would chop 30% from the budget of both the National Endowment for the Arts ($46,000,000 in fiscal year 1982) and the National Endowment for the Humanities ($39,000,000 also in fiscal year 1982). Also proposed is a 25% cut in the budget of the Coporation for Public Broadcasting (PBS TV and Radio), and the total extinction of the Labor Department's CETA program which employs 100,000 artists (from all mediums) nationwide. The proposed cuts have aroused the ire of arts groups who have begun a massive lobbying effort to either change the Administration's policy or defeat the program in Congress.

Stockman argues in his proposal to President Reagan (a former President of the Screen Actor's Guild) that, "For too long the Endowments have spread Federal financing into an ever wider range of artistic and literary endeavor, promoting the notion that the Federal government should be the financial patron of the first resort for both individuals and institutions engaged in artistic and literary pursuits. This policy has resulted in a reduction in the historic role of private individual and corporate philanthropic support in these key areas."

Stockman's assessment has been severely attacked by Livingston Biddle, Chairman of the National Arts Endowment. Biddle argues that Federal arts support of over $250 million since 1965 has garnered $3 billion in private contribution over the same period (a 12-fold increase) and that the Endowment's challange grant program has netted $500 million in revenue from the private sector.

Another critic of Stockman's proposals is Anne Murphy, executive director of the American Arts Alliance, an organization of 350 arts groups lobbying against the cuts. Murphy points out that her member organizations receive only 5% of their annual operating budgets from the Federal government, which is crucial to the recruitment of the other 95% from other arts doners.

One of the problems facing the lobbying groups have been the defeat of the Congressional arts advocates in both houses (like Representatives John Brademas and Frank Thompson and Senator Jacob Javits) in the November election. The end result of this defeat has been that elected officials who have not taken an active role in the preservation of the arts now chair Congressional panels which control the Endowment's fate. It is the difficult task of the lobby groups to win new support from this new power structure. The result of that struggle could well determine the future of the arts in America for the foreseeable future.

★ ★ ★

Suggested by the novel *The Shrinking Man* by Richard Matheson, *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* is Joel Schumacher's feature film directoral debut. Lily Tomlin portrays housewife Pat Kramer, in her comic struggle to survive the heartbreak and dangers of shrinking to the height of a toy soldier.

★ ★ ★

Francis Ford Coppola's *One From the Heart* has been able to continue shooting thanks to an emergency loan from Paramount Pictures to

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Three views of Napoleon Bonaparte (played by Albert Dejdonne) as pictured through Abel Gance's camera. From *Napoleon*.

Coppola's beleagured Zoetrope Studios. The bail out came in the form of an advance of Paramount's $500,000 purchase of a "percentage" of an SF property being developed by Zoetrope entitled *Interface* and a $500,000 personal loan from Paramount to Coppola. In the past Paramount as the producer of both *Godfather* films has had a very successful and lucrative relationship with Coppola.

In an emergency measure, Zoetrope has been forced to lay off some more personnel (characterized in a *Variety* report as "a small number") and all remaining employees have taken a voluntary 50% cut in pay. Studio president Robert Spiotta explained that the cuts are retroactive and the deducted amount will be paid to the workers at a later date.

As part of his commitment to the project, Coppola invested an additional $1,000,000 of his personal funds to *One From the Heart* last month in order to keep shooting the feature. Reportedly he already has invested $1,000,000 in the picture and has not recieved $2 million of his $3 million directing fee.

In addition to serving as a place for Coppola to make films unemcumbered by a studio looking over his shoulder, Zoetrope has participated in a number of other projects including the film adaptation of *The Black Stallion* and Jean-Luc Godard's *Every Man For Himself*.

Coppola insists that despite whatever financial problems he may encounter, he will not agree to a deal which will erode his artistic control and he will not close down either his film or his studio.

★ ★ ★

Another Zoetrope project, the reconstruction of Abel Gance's 1927 silent classic *Napoleon* is being regarded as a major cinematic event. Its three weekend run (9 screenings) at Radio City Music Hall grossed over $1,000,000 and a national tour is currently being planned.

Accompanying the groundbreaking film is a new score by Francis Ford Coppola's father, Carmine Coppola, who won an Academy Award in 1975 with Nino Rota for their score of *Godfather II*. The senior Coppola personally conducted the 60 piece American Symphony Orchestra which performed his score live at each screening of the film.

The 4½ hour film which is prized by film scholars and historians for its innovative techniques, traces the career of Napoleon from his student years to his monumental military triumphs. To accomodate the epic vision of history, the film suddenly widens into three screens at the inception of the climatic battle in the last reel. The three camera, three projector, three screen process (called Triptych Polyvision) was invented by Mr. Gance in the 1920's, 30 years before Cinerama.

First shown at the Paris Opera House in 1927, *Napoleon* was not successful in its initial release. The difficulties of projecting the film (due to its reliance on Gance's novel process) made the film difficult to distribute and the emergence of the talkie with *The Jazz Singer* just six months later compounded the problem. Over the intervening years, the film was re-edited constantly

until only a few mutilated copies of the film survived.

Enter film scholar Kevin Brownlow (director of *Winstaaley* and producer of the acclaimed 13 part *Hollywood* series). When Brownlow saw a partial version of *Napoleon* in the late 60's, he decided to embark on what was to become a 13 year task of reconstructing the film. Nearly every film archive in the world was contacted and although *Napoleon* has finally been rereleased, the film is still not completed. Brownlow told *The New York Times* that, "this final version is still a few reels short of the original. The most tragic losses are the triptych sequences which Mr. Gance says he destroyed in a fit of despair when he realized his system would never be adapted. With just the final triptych left, we can only imagine the impact of the lost sequences."

Coppola, who backed the presentation of the seven hour Hans-Jurgen Syberberg film *Our Hitler—A Film From Germany* last year, decided to distribute the film after seeing a partially reconstructed version in 1973. Originally three screenings had been scheduled at Radio City, but the public response was so overwhelming that six additional performances were quickly scheduled and a national tour is planned. The tour (in which Carmine Coppola will conduct the local orchestras performing his score) has not been finalized, but screenings in cities with the proper theater facilities to accomodate a 60 piece orchestra like Atlanta, Washington DC, Detroit, Cleveland and Los Angeles (among others) will more than likely be part of the tour.

Meanwhile Carmine Coppola is recording his score to enable the film to be distributed to smaller houses and to be seen by a much larger number of people.

The now 92 year old Gance was inconsolable despite the long-awaited recognition of his masterpiece. As an artist denied his forum since 1963, Mr. Gance was bitter about the irony of being discovered as a master 50 years after the completion of his film, "I despise the dust of which I am made...and give it to you," he muses, "I'm useless unless I make another film...a pitiful old man whose last project *Christopher Columbus* remains unrealized."

★ ★ ★

Bernard Lee, the British actor who portrayed "M" in all but the most recent James Bond film, died on January 16 in a London hospital of cancer. His other films included roles in *The Detectives*, *The Third Man*, *Ring of Treason* and many others. His illness had prevented him from appearing in the just completed Bond film, *For Your Eyes Only*. He died at the age of 73.

★ ★ ★

"*The Dogs of War* are mercenaries, the professional soldiers of fortune who roam the globe selling their services to the highest bidder, often impervious to the morality of the assignment and its political integrity," reads the press guide's description of the recently released film starring Christopher Walken.

The film adaptation of the highly acclaimed Frederick Forsythe intends to explore the psyche of the mercenary soldiers who pride themselves on their "professional" approach to war and suffering. Director John Irvin (*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*) explains, "I met a lot of mercenaries [*when he directed a number of documentaries in the 60's*], soldiers of fortune, veterans of Algiers and South East Asia who simply couldn't settle down again. And while I don't necessarily agree with the morality of what they do, I'm bound to say that I'm impressed with their thwarted idealism and the compassion they showed to the innocent victims of a conflict. Yes, I said compassion . . ."

The Dogs of War was plagued by a number of production problems, not the least of which was finding a location for the "fictitious West African state" that Christopher Walken (as Jamie Shannon, the film's protagonist) leads an attack against. Forsythe's description was not fictitious enough for any country in the tension-wracked area so the film had to be shot in the British Carribean colony of Belize (formerly British Honduras).

★ ★ ★

According to Marilyn Beck's column in *The New York Daily News*, the movie adaptations of *Terry and the Pirates* and *Brenda Starr* have been delayed.

The *Terry* film (which has sparked interest in a revival of the strip) has apparently run into financial trouble. Avco Embassy has not been able to raise enough money to finance the film which has been budgeted in excess of $12 million.

The *Brenda Starr* movie has been delayed by a court fight between two rival producers (Steve Friedman and International Film Investors) who both claim to have secured the rights to do a big screen adaptation of the strip.

★ ★ ★

In *The Last Metro* Francois Truffaut has satisfied a long-time dream to make a film that captures and evokes the climate of German-occupied France. Truffaut told Annette Insdorf of *The New York Times* that "At the beginning of my career, I couldn't do it, because it was too close to *The 400 Blows*, not in terms of the occupation, but to my own age at that time."

© 1981 United Artists

In a quiet, comfortable setting, the four mercenary soldiers plot a coup in *The Dogs of War*. From left to right: Jean-Francois Stevenin, Christopher Walken, Tom Berrenger and Paul Freeman.

© 1981 United Artists

Are mercenary soldiers driven by demons that don't allow them to retire and lead a more normal life?" John Irvin, the director of *The Dogs of War* (based on the Frederick Forsythe novel) has based the film around that concept.

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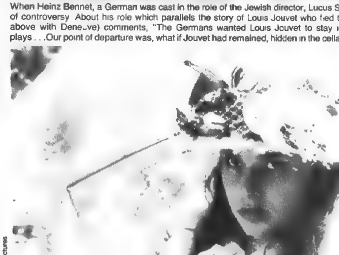
When Heinz Bennet, a German was cast in the role of the Jewish director, Lucus Steiner, it aroused a great deal of controversy. About his role which parallels the story of Louis Jouvet who fled the country, Bennett (pictured above with Dene..ve) comments, "The Germans wanted Louis Jouvet to stay in France and stage German plays . . .Our point of departure was, what if Jouvet had remained, hidden in the cellar of this theater?"



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The daughter of German actor Klaus Kinski, Nastassia Kinski, is the same age as Tess, which is her first major screen role.

A whole series of French films dealt with the German occupation in the 70's (including Marcel Ophuls' powerful documentary about French complicity, *The Sorrow and the Pity*) and Truffaut decided to wait until a time when the subject was not so much in vogue to make his statement on the subject. That time arrived when Truffaut read actor Jean Marais's autobiography and decided to combine the setting with another filmmaking goal, "to take the camera backstage in the theater."

The story opens as Lucas Steiner (Heinz Bennent), a respected German-Jewish stage director is forced to go underground to escape mounting anti-Semitic sentiment. His wife Marion (Catherine Deneuve) is entrusted to manage the problem of pleasing a pro-Nazi drama critic (Jean-Louis Richard) without compromising her husband's work, the romantic appeal of her new leading man (Gerald Depardieu) and the curfew which requires that the final curtain to come down in time for the night's last subway service.

The Last Metro has opened to critical acclaim and has been nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film of 1980. But for Truffaut, the director of 20 feature films, "The result is a film of love and adventure which I hope, expresses our *[Truffaut and co-scripter Suzanne Schiffman]* aversion to all forms of racism and intolerance, but also our profound affection for those who have chosen the acting profession and who pursue it come what may."

* * *

Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Ubervilles* is a marked departure from Roman Polanski's usual subject matter. The novel which is generally regarded as Hardy's masterpiece, is built around the fate of a country girl whose parents chance discovery of their nobel descent send her to seek the assistance of wealthy relatives and thus brings about her fall.

Polanski's first wife Sharon Tate had first brought the novel to his attention. "I had always wanted to film a great love story," says the expatriate director, "but what also fascinated me about this novel was its preoccupation with the vicissitudes of fate. The heroine has every attribute that should make for happiness —personal beauty, an engaging personality and a spirited approach to life—yet the social climate she inhabits and the inexorable pressures it exerts upon her gradually trap her in a chain of circumstances that culminate in tragedy."

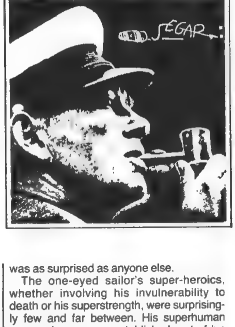
Tess was released in a few theaters last December. It was speculated that Polanski's legal problems (he is still facing a rape charge in California) might hamper box office response, but surprisingly the film did well enough to be released nationally and to be nominated for seven Academy Awards including Best Picture and Best Director

NOTES

Norman Lear is the executive producer of **Heartsounds**, based on the book by **Martha Weinman Lear** (the widow of his cousin). **Fay Kanin** will write the film . . .The Soviet Union is co-producing a feature film on **Nehru** with the Indian government . . .**Gena Rowlands** is joining husband **John Cassavettes** in **Tempest**, which is being directed by **Paul Mazursky** . . .After a wait of almost five year's **Carol Burnett**'s $5 million libel suit against **The National Enquirer** is going to trial. Waiting their turn are 11 other celebrity lawsuits totaling close to $60,000,000 . . .**George Romero**'s new film **Knightriders** will premiere in April . . .**Peter Yarrow** formerly of Peter, Paul and Mary was granted a full pardon on an 11 year old moral charge conviction by President Jimmy Carter just before Carter left office . . .**Aileen Quinn** 9½ years old has been cast in the title role of the motion picture **Annie**. **John Huston** is directing the film which will also feature **Carol Burnett** . . .There is talk of a film adaptation of **Jimmy Breslin**'s **Can't Anybody Here Play This Game**, about the hapless 1962 New York Mets . . .**Hal Ashby** will direct the film version of **Truman Capote**'s **Handcarved Coffins** from a screenplay by **Judith Rosscoe**. The story concerns a series of bizarre midwestern murders in which the murder victims were sent miniature coffins before they were killed . . .**Julie Andrews** will appear in **Victoria, Victoria**, a comedy being produced by her husband **Blake Edwards** . . **Jack Warden** and **Ryan O'Neal** are starring in **Andrew Bergman**'s **So Fine** . . .**Jane Fonda**, **Kris Kristofferson** and **Hume Cronym** are featured in **Alan Pakula**'s new film, **Rollover** . . **Woody Allen** has written a new play which the new Lincoln Center Theatre Company will present in April at the Vivian Beaumont Theatre in New York . . .Steven Bach, the senior vice-president of United Artists reports that **Michael Cimino** is being "extremely cooperative" in helping to cut 90 minutes out of **Heaven's Gate** . . To celebrate the upcoming centennial of his birth **Eugene O'Neill**'s family cottage in New London, Connecticut (the setting for **Long Day's Journey Into Night** and **Ah, Wilderness**) is being restored. The home is being recreated in part from the O'Neill stage directions in those two plays . . .**NOW SHOOTING: Shadowland** with **Michael Murphy**, **Dan Shore** and **Louise Fletcher** . . .**Pennies From Heaven** with **Steve Martin**, **Bernadette Peters**, **Jessica Harper** and **Christopher Walken** . . .**Shoot the Moon** directed by **Alan Parker** and starring **Albert Finney** . . **Lady Chatterly's Lover** directed by **Just Jaeckin** and starring **Sylvia Kristel** . . . . . ■

THE FIRST (ARF, ARF) SUPERHERO OF THEM ALL

by BILL BLACKBEARD



"The First (Arf, Arf) Super-Hero Of Them All" was originally published in **All In Color For A Dime**. Copyright ©1970 by Richard A. Lupoff and Don Thompson (Arlington House $11.95) All Rights Reserved.

It is a sign of the essentially mythic quality of the comic book superheroes that one can rarely imagine their reaction to stimuli not a normal part of their highly stylized world of melodrama. How, for example, can one speculate on the likely response of Superman, Batman, or Hawkman at a freewheeling press conference to so simple a query as: "How does it feel, being a superhero?"

The question is deflating; it automatically makes the hero an oddball. If he says, "I like it fine," he seems a dull goof. If he says he *doesn't* like it or tries to grin and modestly deny the applicability of the term to himself, one wonders why the hell he's wearing that garish union suit and cloak.

Yet one of these three feeble, stereotyped, self-indicting responses, stated with careful dignity and pride, is all we can legitimately imagine from a serious comic superhero—and it is a purely random guess as to who would give each answer.

The only kind of response that would be liberating, human, and reasonable is one that would at once reflect the silliness of the question and the absurdity of the superhero label and function, a reply that is highly unlikely to come from any serious superhero's chiseled lips: *"Superhero?* Wha's a superhero? Does ya get it at the supermarket? Arf, arf!"

To a reader who takes the superheroes with dead seriousness, this is the response of an idiot. To most others, it is probably surprising and amusing. But, most important, it is the imaginable reply of an *individual* human being, functioning in a human world: it is, in fact, a refreshing, barbaric yawp out of the comic pages of 30 years ago. For the crudely humorous arfer, quoted above in words he—and only he —might have uttered, is the first genuine, unshootable, unpoisonable, door-smashing, house-lifting comic strip superham of them all—Elzie Christer Segar's Popeye.

Segar's Popeye is a character compounded of vulgarity and compassion, raw aggression, and protective gentleness, violent waterfront humor and genuine "senskibilikky," thickheaded stubbornness and imaginative leadership, brutal enmity and warm friendship, who can knock out a "horsk" in rage and nurse a baby carefully while it is suffering a fever that makes thermometers pop. He is no paranoid daydream, but a realistic, complex, often wrong but determined man of action who suffers continual agonies of decision, who pursues what he believes to be right far beyond the bounds of cop-interpreted law and order, who has to fight his very way to comprehensibility through the warp and woof of an English language that is often almost too much for him.

Knobby-kneed, swollen-armed, with a face like a shipwreck (as his "sweetpatootie," Olive Oyl, once called it), Popeye, even cald in spangled ballet tights and a stage villain's cloak, would last about as long as Sheldon Mayer's great, fat, clumsy Red Tornado of decades ago. Superhero fans seem to want their idols formed from the same stalwart mold. The gnarly mold that shaped Popeye was properly shattered after his creation, sometime late in 1928 on a sun-splashed drawing board in Santa Monica, California, about a year after Philip Wylie wrote—but had not yet published—the first superman novel, *Gladiator*. (When Wylie's seminal work appeared, in March 1930, Popeye had already been on the comic page for 14 months, and many newspaper readers were well prepared for Wylie's prose account of a superhuman being.)

It was on Thursday, January 17, 1929, that a lumpy and unprepossessing Popeye (seemingly years older than the personable character Segar later perfected) first appeared, but it was not until June 10 of that year that the world realized it was watching the adventures of a man literally incapable of being killed—and Popeye, it turned out, was as surprised as anyone else.

The one-eyed sailor's super-heroics, whether involving his invulnerability to death or his superstrength, were surprisingly few and far between. His superhuman powers became an established part of his character, but were not emphasized.

Of far greater interest to Segar and most of his readers was Popeye's scrappiness and cheerful contempt for most social conventions, including "correck" speech.

It seems ironically amusing that such a major comic personality, widely enjoyed in his own right, should have been the disinterested and comparatively unobtrusive agency through which the later obsessive concept of superhuman strength was introduced to the comic strips—and to the world of popular art as a whole.

Yet the popularity of Popeye with the public during the heyday of Segar's strip far surpassed anything Superman or any other comic book or strip superhero ever knew. Far more people flocked to movie palaces in the thirties to see Max Fleischer *Popeye* cartoons (*just* to see them, in many cases, when the semi-feature-length Popeye specials were released) than ever went to watch the *Superman* or *Batman* serials.

The same *Popeye* cartoons were for a long time the single most popular children's TV series—until their appeal was ruined by the addition of TV-produced originals which lacked the imagination and fantasy of the earlier Fleischer work. The Segar strip had the widest newspaper subscription of any comic history until Schulz's *Peanuts* of today; the comic strips of *Superman* and *Batman* (both early and later versions) were small potatoes by comparison.

Popeye's super-"abilikies" (which we will go into later) were, indeed, used so casually (in contrast to the spotlighted bombast of the muscle-bound superheroes) that thousands of fans, literally experts in the limited area of superhero comic art, have ignored or forgotten his pioneering role and have assigned it instead to the egregious Superman of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster.

CASTOR IS STILL WINNING AND HE'LL CONTINUE AS LONG AS BLUTHCE, THE STRANGE LUCK BIRD IS WITH HIM
"NUNE" MELDLE. STAY HOT!
THE MANAGER OF THE GAMBLING PALACE IS BESIDE HIMSELF! HAS NUTTY
FADEWELL, MY ENGINEER WILL WILL ME - I MUST STOP THIS SHRUMP!
GENTLEMEN, I APPEAL TO THE PATRONS OF THIS PLACE OF CHANCE FOR HELP— IF WE DON'T STOP THIS UNSTRAP HE'LL BREAK THE BANK AND RUIN YOUR PALACE OF RECREATION
LET'S KICK HIM OUT! ARE YOU WITH ME, GENTLEMEN?
WE ARE NOT!
WELL SEE THAT HE GETS ALL THE GAMBLING HE WANTS
YOU THINK NOTHING OF TAKING OUR MONEY - BUT WHEN THE TABLES ARE TURNED YOU SQUEAL!
HERE FOR HIM
GO COMB YOUR HAIR
© 1961 King Features Syndicate

HEY-CASTOR OYL, WHY DON'TCHER GET SATCHSHED AND QUIT? BLOW ME DOWN!
SHUT UP, POPEYE
THERE'S ANOTHER SEVERAL MISTER- SHOOT THE WORKS
I WISH YOU'D NEVER BEEN BORN! WOT'S EATIN' YOU?
WHY SHOULD I WORRY LIKE THIS? IT ISN'T MY MONEY- BUT I'M IN CHARGE - AND OLD FADEWELL WILL WILL ME WHEN HE RETURNS - HE'S A HARD MAN
THERE CAN'T BE MUCH LEFT IN THE SAFE I'D BETTER GO + COUNT IT
GOOD NIGHT ONLY THIRTY MILLION LEFT!
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SHOOT THE WORKS I!
HEY-I SAYS - YOU WUNDERSHOOM MEY - WHYNTCHER QUIT?
DON'T ROIL ME, BONEY!
CASTS OYL, I SAYS THE BOURSE BOAT'S FULL BUE CAN'T GET ANOTHER MILLION HARDER.
SHOOT EIGHT HUNDRED THOUSAND!
I SAYS, WE'RE ALL IN FROM NOWAH JACK. DOLIN TO THE ROWER BOAT
I SAYS- ANYTHCHER NEUER GOYNER GET SATCHSHED. PS
NO I AIN'T NEVER!! NOT TILL I BUST THE BANK GET OUT OF HERE YOU SCUM OR SEUEN SEAS!
BLOW ME DOWN! WELL- BLOW- ME- DOWN!
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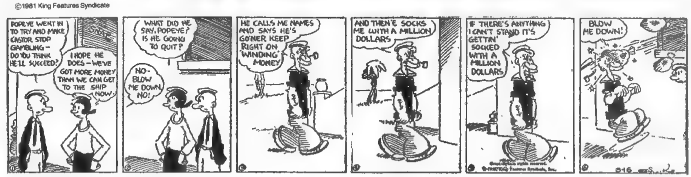
POPEYE WENT IN TO TRY AND MAKE CASTOR STOP GAMBLING - DO YOU THINK HE'LL SUCCEED?
I HOPE HE DOES - WE'VE GOT MORE MONEY THAN WE CAN GET TO THE SHIP NOW
WHAT DID HE SAY, POPEYE? IS HE GOING TO QUIT?
NO- BLOW ME DOWN NO!
HE CALLS ME NAMES AND SAYS HE'S GOINER KEEP RIGHT ON WINNING MONEY
AND THEN I SOCKS ME WITH A MILLION DOLLARS
IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN'T STAND IT'S GETTIN SOCKED WITH A MILLION DOLLARS
BLOW ME DOWN!
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HALP!
COME ON, CASTOR, DON'T STALL AROUND LIKE THAT- GIVE HIM THE WORKS
SAY, MAN! MAYBE YOU BETTER SHOOT HIM
HALP!
NO - IT'S YOUR GUN I NEVER USE OTHER PEOPLES GUNS!
OH, MORE DOES
HURRY UP, CASTOR, BEFORE HE SHAKES HER TEETH OUT
I THINK I'D BETTER SNEAK UP ON HIM - I WANT TO MAKE A GOOD CLEAN JOB OF THIS
HALP!

This is, perhaps, just as well, for on a gut-instinctive level, the kids were right about the origin of their passion. The very name of the 1938 comic book character (who, after all *was* the first cloaked and tights-outfitted superhero), the ringing, exciting *Superman* was in itself the first blunt, undisguised appeal to juvenile fantasy-wishes to get a contrary world firmly in hand and *take charge*.

Old "Blow-Me-Down" Popeye, as he was billed in Castor Oyl's posters promoting his early "s'prise-fights," was reluctant to take charge of anything at all and only did so when goaded by slowly mounting fury, when pushed into accepting authority by the total inability of anyone else in sight to handle things, when impelled by some impractical, Galahadian ideal (such as "pilgrimatin'" a new country), or when Olive Oyl (or some other character) was endangered.

Popeye certainly didn't hover around rooftops looking for nefarious activities to spring down on and *smash*. On the contrary, he preferred to live "simply," in an undistinguished house, on the proceeds of his boxing or some recent treasure-hunting expedition. He stayed with his fantastic array of cronies—Toar, Alice the Goon, Poopdeck Pappy, Eugene the Jeep, and his "adoptik" kid, Swee' Pea, until some "irrikating" problem jabbed at him long enough to provoke him to action.

Before we describe a typical Popeye adventure, let's take a detailed look at the remarkable dramatis personae of the *Popeye* strip. No cartoonist ever populated a comic strip with quite so many striking and memorable personalities (the names of two, Goon and Jeep, became so familiar through popular usage that they have been included in the pages of Webster's and other dictionaries) or so sharply rivalled the great comic novelists in the various subtle ways they were integrated into the picaresque flow of his comic narrative.

The fact is that the young Segar—he was 34 when he conceived Popeye—was fascinated with the absurdities and perversities of human behavior, and no other cartoonist ever portrayed the knobbier variations in temperament and motivation so graphically and unforgettably. Segar liked people, particularly people despised by the public at large. He tended to champion their forlorn stand against the world, without losing sight of the antisocial biases and torments that made them what they were. The depth and seriousness of his understanding are always evident beneath the grand comic sporting on the surface, as in the work of the greatest comic artists.

Popeye, of course, was Segar's most original, most individual personage, but if Popeye had not made Segar's critical fortune, the rotund, mooching J. Wellington Wimpy of the open hand and empty stomach would certainly have done so. And long before Popeye and Wimpy entered the comic strip, Segar's earlier cast of characters was already making a reputation for the cartoonist: Castor Oyl, the irrepressible, pint-sized bum who never took failure as final, blandly cheating and swindling his way to disaster and swaggering eagerly back for more; Olive Oyl, his sister, gawky and bony, but as certain of her charms as a courted ostrich, who—long before the start of her rocky tatterdemalion affair with Popeye—was sure that Castor's shady activities represented the fullness of life's possibilities and doggedly undertook to aid or follow him despite his disgusted rebuffs; and Ham Gravy, a lean, banana-nosed fall-guy, who adored Olive for reasons best known to himself (unless, as was often the case, there was a more attractive girl around) and wasted his time palling around with Castor until the entrance of Popeye ultimately edged him offstage and into one of the dustier corners of Segar's imagination.

Olive—of course—and Castor Oyl continued to appear in the strip after Popeye's appearance. Other recurring characters who lent so much to the comic fantasy and rich humanity of the strip were the long-whiskered King Blozo, the melancholy-mad monarch of Nazilia, whose one pleasure in a miserable life was reading American comic strips; the terrible-toothed Oscar, a one-time subject of Blozo's, as aggressively goofy as Jerry Lewis, but rather more amusing because Segar realized that very little of such antics goes a long way and kept Oscar's on-stage pratfalls to a minimum; the cadaverous, ghoulish Sea Hag, whose skeleton ship haunted the dark seas of the earth and whose periodic reappearance in Segar's strip provoked letters from outraged parents who said their children were having nightmares as a result; Alice the Goon, the Sea Hag's shadow-skulking subhuman warrior woman whose broad chest, bulging forearms, furred middle, and gneving, cavern-eyed, rhesus-nosed face gave *adults* nightmares; Toar, the million-year-old caveman, who once drank from "Pool of Never-Die," and whose gargantuan hulk was in the service of the Sea Hag's sister until he, like Alice abandoned the sea witches to join Popeye's bunch; Eugene the Jeep, the spotted, pot-bellied, two foot-high creature who could move in and out of the fourth dimension at will and foretell the future with invariable accuracy as he munched his favorite delicacy, five-dollar orchids.

Others included George W. Geezil, the tangle-bearded paranoid, who felt persecuted by the mere proximity of "flies-in-mine-zupe" Wimpy and schemed to murder the cloying moocher by any reasonable means at hand; Roughhouse, the grizzle-lipped waterfront restaurateur, plagued by miserable business and the importunities of Wimpy until he was likely to seize a meat cleaver and clamber over the counter in red-eyed pursuit of the panhandler; Poopdeck Pappy, Popeye's long-lost father, who was the plug-spitting image of his son except for his unshaven chin, black-collared shirt, and tattoo-free arms, but whose nocturnal behavior (when buoyed by cash) could begin with mere antisocialities like pushing ugly women into the river and then galloping (in the tilt of a glass of "fizzly water") to demonic misuse and destruction of anything or anyone in sight; and Swee'Pea, the bald, mute, nightshirted and intensely personable "infink kid" adopted by Popeye, who would cheerfully break his nursing bottle over the head of anyone mordantly inclined to kitchy-koos.

There was a host of others less spotlighted but quite as sharply realized, who reappeared from time to time over the years. Among them were Olive's long-suffering parents, Cole and Nana Oyl; Mr. Kliph, the maddened and frustrated boxing promoter, obsessed with the idea of somehow getting Popeye demolished in the ring, whose increasingly desperate attempts included backing a gorilla and a robot against Popeye; and Pooky Jones, Poopdeck's short, bewhiskered sea buddy, who helped haunt a ship for the hell of it and aided Poopdeck in his salty affairs with mermaids.

Finally, there were the innumerable bizarre figures who appeared only once in the strip but were often unforgettable, such as the Sea Hag's equally shrewish sister who shared the longing with the Sea Hag—the chance to hear her sister's death-rattle; "Salty" Bill Barnacle, an old, pre-1929 sidekick of Popeye, whose appearance in Rough-house's one day in 1933 triggered the great ten-month Sunday page adventure of "Plunder Island (which was, in this author's opinion, the greatest comic strip narrative of all time); Bluto, a mammoth, blood-thirsty rogue who appeared in a 1932 adventure called "The Eighth Sea" (Segar usually gave his story episodes specific names), who became Popeye's permanent opponent in the Paramount movie cartoons, largely because he was the heavy in the comic strip at the time the new film series was shaping up in Hollywood; and many, many others, including a host of unnamed Segar standbys, such as his frantic, pill-prescribing doctors; his brutal and/or stupid cops; his armies of sensibly frightened, peace-loving soldiers; his wily but decent small-town sheriffs; his bemused judges; war-crazed generals; egomaniacal "diktapaters;" money-mad industrialists; and melancholy cartoonists, that would take pages simply to list.

As Coulton Waugh summed it up in *The Comics*, Segar had "comic genius." After considering the gripping, thrilling, unflaggingly funny continuity Segar maintained through more than 750 Sunday pages from 1924 to 1938, and more than 5800 daily strips from 1920 to 1938, for a rough total of 47,000 panels, it does seem to be just as simple—and just as remarkable—as that.

At an initial glance, there appeared to be very little that was prepossessing or im-

I GUESS OUR GOOSES ARE COOKED!
GEESE, YOU RANDOMLY BAD NOT GOOSES
YES-IM THROUGH! TRIFLING WITH YOU. I'LL TAKE NO MORE CHANCES
I DON'T KNOW WHAT FADEWELL WILL DO WITH YOU - HIS YACHT WILL BE ALONGSIDE ANY MINUTE NOW!
MOVE EVEN ONE SIXTEENTH OF AN INCH AND I'LL CUT LOOSE

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CAESAR JONES! HE ADOPTED ME AND CASHIN DIED! DIDN'T DIDDLE DIDDLE DIDDLE DIE!
JUST GOT ROBBED OF TEN MILLION AND HE'S HAPPY AS A LARK.
I CAN'T DODGE YOU AT ALL!
OH DON'T MIND ME.
NO SENSE IN WORRYING. WHY DON'T YOU BE LIKE ME? AM I DOWN HEARTED? NO!
HYDROBIKE
YOU'VE EITHER GOT SO MUCH BRAINS THAT YOU'RE ABLE TO CONTROL YOURSELF OR ELSE YOU'RE TOO DUMB TO WORRY!
SURE, THAT'S IT!
WHAT'S A HYDROBIKE?
POPEYE
BLIND ME DOUR BUT YOU'RE TOUGH!

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WELL, WEREWOLFBONE, I MIGHT LET GO OF YOUR NECK! I STEAL ONLY MONEY. WILL YOU?
BLOW ME DOWN. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF THAT EGG!
CURSE YOU, FAIN, THAT!
AND THAT
HEY - SAVE SOME FOR TONGOROO!! YOU FOOL!! WHAT MAKES YOU BE LIKE THAT??
IT'S JUST MY IMAGINATION, POPEYE - I CAN'T CONTROL IT - SURE, I'M ALL RIGHT
YEAH, YOU'RE ALL RIGHT 'N LOOK SWELL
WHEN I THINK OF WEREWOLFBONE ENDING HIMSELF ON OUR MONEY I NEARLY GO WILD
A DISGRACE TO THE FINE OLD WEREWOLFBONE FAMILY - THE LAST OF THE FAMILY A THIEF! WHY DID I TAKE IT?

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IT BEATS ME, CASTOR LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY AND SEEMS TO LIKE IT - SMILES LIKE A SAP ALL THE TIME
KNOCK KNOCK
GO SEE WHO'S AT THE DOOR, CASTOR
WHY, HELLO OLIVE, OLD HO! HOW'S EVERYTHING? COME RIGHT IN

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HUNTING FOR A FELLOW HIS SIZE IN THIS AFRICAN JUNGLE IS LIKE LOOKIN' FOR A NEEDLE IN A CARGO OF BEANS
I DON'T KNOW WHICH WAY TO GO SO WE'LL GO THIS WAY
NO! LET'S GO THIS WAY!
I'LL PASS OUT IF HE ROARS AGAIN
I CAN STAND ANYTHING BUT LIONS - OH BOY! IF THERE WERE NO LIONS EVERYTHING WOULD BE OK.
WAFFLE

pressive in Segar's style. Mostly, it seemed to be comprised of squiggles and blobs, some of which wore hats and some of which wore smokestacks, with the latter usually subordinate to the former. His characters had dots for eyes, flat ovals (in most cases) for faces, simple peg noses, one-line mouths, and curlicue ears, while their hair was a loop or a half dozen sketchy lines. The backgrounds looked, at first, like something turned out desperately as last-minute pulp art.

But—none of that matters. All you have to do to fall under the spell of the strip is to start reading the old daily or Sunday pages, anywhere between 1920 and 1938, and—very suddenly, very soon—the scrawly characters become invested with delightful life and personality, the backgrounds swell with mystery and terror or dance with sunlit humor, and you are hopelessly caught up in whatever story is under way.

If this is not comic genius at work, then there is none in Dickens, Twain, Waugh, Herriman, Chaplin, or W. C. Fields. We only have to acknowledge and enjoy it—as in the daily sequence which ran from December 14, 1936, to April 3, 1937. The story was called "Mystery Melody" and opened on a typically poetic and shuddery note

It was night at Popeye's house. Olive was visiting, and she and Popeye stood looking across the room at a dejected Poopdeck Pappy. "Acks kind of queer, don't ya think, Olive?" Popeye asked. "Look at him—listenin'—always listenin'." Then Segar threw the title panel at us: a blackly shadowed hillside on which stood a lean, dark silhouette with a gigantic, spread-winged vulture behind it; beyond the hill, a black three-master, afloat on a moonlit sea. "MYSTERY MELODY," read the title, "A Mystery as Deep as the Sea . . ."

"There! There!" Poopdeck cried in a frenzy a night later."Do ye hear it?" Popeye and Olive looked at each other, unable to hear a sound. "Sssssh—"Poopdeck said, in one of those dramatic series of small dialogue balloons which added so much to the pace of Segar's work, "Sssssh—hear it? Listen. There it is now. Ssh— It's floatin' in off'n the sea!"

The next night, Poopdeck had calmed a little and was seated in front of Popeye. Obviously, he felt it time to explain. "Son," he said, "I wants to tell ye before it's too late that onc't upon a time many years ago I was a kind-hearted swab. I don't mean that I was soft—I had me share of fights like all sailormen. But I was hooman then—aye, up to the time I was thirty-seven. I be ninety-nine now."

Poopdeck, it seemed, had proposed marriage to a beautiful girl, then fled when she appeared in her true guise as the Sea Hag, a scrawny, ugly, black-hooded creature of only token femaleness. The Hag had come for him again and not even Toar could fight her—the Hag's vulture (possibly her sister transformed to a bird) lifted his 900-pound carcass and dropped him through Popeye's roof. Pappy was captured by the Hag and put in her castle dungeon. Popeye enlisted Wimpy's aid, but the Hag took Wimpy to her boat for a romantic interlude. (Wimpy had once made love to her in exchange for a barrel of hamburgers).

Wimpy was not completely treasonous, however, and used the witch's magic flute to pipe food supplies to the captive Poopdeck. He also piped himself an immense quanitity of hamburgers and, at one point, an entire cow.

Popeye located his kidnapped Pappy with the aid of the Jeep, which then unveiled other power, that of mummifying and de-magicking witches. He left the witch stiff as a post, but not dead. She sailed away at the end of the episode.

From his yard overlooking the harbor, Popeye pointed to the sky just above the sea. "Look, Olive," he said, "there goes the bird, headin' out to sea—out toward that ship. Hah—it's *her* ship, an' she's puttin' on canvas. The ol' Hag'll sail to another one of her magic castles far away, an' I yam glad she ain't dead."

Popeye's closing "sediments" represented those of most followers of the strip. Segar's superbly malevolent Sea Hag, however, was not seen again after "Mystery Melody," though she had been involved in four previous adventures; her almost certainly scheduled return was forever cancelled by Segar's death little more than a year later.

Despite Segar's death, a ragtag, chuckle-headed lot of characters named "Sea Hag," "Popeye," "Wimpy," "Olive Oyl," etc., can still be seen doggedly hanging around the comic books, funny pages, and TV screens almost a third of a century later. Since 1938 these creatures have, of course, been the products of other hands and they present a considerable problem in writing about Segar's characters and strip today, for images in the writer's mind are not likely to be those familiar to most readers under forty.

Segar was ill for a long period in 1937; the strips he was unable to draw then were ghosted by King Features' continuity trouble-shooter, Doc Winner. Recovering for a time, Segar drew several more months of daily and Sunday work on his own—dailies through August, 1938, and Sundays through October 9, 1938. After Segar's death, the daily strip was ghosted for a week by Joe Musial, then taken over again by Winner for the remainder of 1938.

In 1939, both the daily and Sunday strips were drawn by Bela Zaboly, with Tom Sims on the story. This team worked on the Popeye strip through the war years and the late forties, until they were replaced by Ralph Stein for a short period. Then the strip was given over to Bud Sagendorf, who turns it out today.

The failure of Segar's successors to maintain the strip on its previous level of adult appeal, coupled with the contrasting box office success of the Popeye movie cartoons in the forties and their subsequent smash impact on TV, apparently led the King Features executives who controlled the Popeye strip to demand that it be slanted at the same enormous juvenile audience which responded so heartily to the movie cartoons. Sagendorf's potential ability to create and maintain a mature, imaginative strip is not therefore in question; it may simply be that he has no need to engage the interest of grownups in his dutiful concentration on entertaining the kiddies.

Whatever the cause of the extreme simplification and demeaning Segar's strip has received over the past 30 years in comic books, newspaper strips, and movie-TV cartoons, it is obvious that readers under 40 have no choice but to turn to the actual Segar strip if they wish to see *why* it was the most popular strip of its time and (with *Krazy Kat* and the Milton Caniff *Terry and the Pirates*) very possibly one of the three greatest achivements in the art of the comic strip. No prose approximation can do the job; like a stage play or a motion picture, a comic strip must be followed in images as well as words to be properly comprehended, and only the original images, in complete sequence as originally published, will serve.

Here, unfortunately, a particularly absurd situation exists. Unlike virtually any book of popular or academic interest, the run of a comic strip cannot simply be plucked off a library shelf or ordered at a book store; nor, like most widely appreciated pieces of graphic art, can it be looked at in a gallery or found reasonably well reproduced in a number of accessible forms. This seems decidedly unfair.

There are a sizeable number of American cartoonists possessed of humorous and narrative gifts that markedly surpass those of some authors still given academic attention, and their equal availability in hard covers should be assired. *The Complete Frank Willard* (20 volumes of *Moon Mullins*) is as logically deserving of library space as the works of John Steinbeck. But since—of course—*all* comic strips have long been condemned out of hand by educators and academics as trash, individual work in the field has never had the critical attention and study individual works of prose fiction have received without question. As a result, if the intelligent reader is whetted by a description of a long-lost comic strip, there is virtually no convenient and routine means by which he can sate it.

It can be done—though with great difficulty—and done, moreover, outside of private, cherished collections or dealers' showrooms with a high bank-balance admission charge. It can be done by bypassing the derivative books and magazines and going directly to the original place of the strip's publication: the newspapers.

The central library in every sizeable American city maintains a file of back

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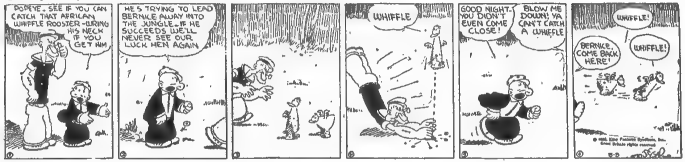
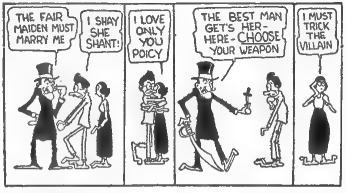
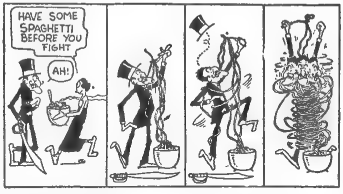

POPEYE, SEE IF YOU CAN CATCH THAT ABRIJAM WHIFFLE ROOSTER-GRAB HIS NECK IF YOU GET HIM
HE'S TRYING TO LEAD BERNICE AWAY INTO THE JUNGLE—IF HE SUCCEEDS WE'LL NEVER SEE OUR LUCK HEN AGAIN
WHIFFLE
GOOD NIGHT-YOU DIDN'T EVEN COME CLOSE!
BLOW ME DOWN! YA CAN'T CATCH A WHIFFLE
WHIFFLE!
BERNICE COME BACK HERE!
WHIFFLE!

To illustrate the difficulty of collecting comic strips, even a scholar like Bill Blackbeard was forced to omit 11 dailies when he compiled the *Thimble Theatre* book published by Hyperion Press in 1977. Those 11 dailies have since surfaced and they are reprinted on the following pages for the first time. The dates of the omitted strips are 3/13/29, 3/14/29, 3/15/29, 3/16/29, 6/1/29, 8/8/29, 8/17/29, 8/24/29, 8/31/29, 4/26/30 and 5/3/30.

OH-EZRA DON'T LEAVE ME
I'M GOIN' TO THE CITY AND MARRY A FINE GAL
MY HEART IS BROKE IN TWAIN
GOSH BUT YOU'RE A CLASSY GAL-I'M LOOKIN' FER A WIFE-I AM
EZRA MEETS A VAMP


THE FAIR MAIDEN MUST MARRY ME
I SHAY SHE SHANT!
I LOVE ONLY YOU! POICY
THE BEST MAN GET'S HER-I HERE-CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON
I MUST TRICK THE VILLAIN



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examples of the early *Thimble Theatre* strip, before a continuous storyline was established, which originally appeared on 12-30-19 and 12-22-19

copies of the local papers and often some major out-of-town journals. These vary, depending on the finances available to the library in past decades, from sad, tied monthly bundles of folded papers, yellowed and crumbling and ready to split down the creases when unfolded, through the more usual twenty-pound, bound volumes of papers, to the recent innovation of monthly microfilm reels of entire runs of papers (with available viewing apparatus) on file in a periodical room.

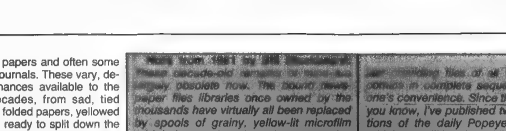
All of this may sound like a bonanza to the comic strip reader and researcher, but it is not. It is very difficult to locate complete runs of *Popeye*. From 1919, when the strip began, to the mid-thirties, the strip ran almost exclusively in Hearst papers. It takes a great deal of effort to locate a city with a source and, once you do (if you do), you will eventually exceed the patience and good nature of library clerks. You may simply want too much, too often, for their taste. How you handle this, in order not to wear out your welcome or have your purposes in reading the old papers too closely question (some libraries flatly forbid any "casual" reading in their newspaper files) is up to you. It may be wise, however great your enthusiasm, to space out your reading, to keep pencil and paper at hand for frequent "notes," and to dress conservatively, even beyond your years if young.

Is it worth it? I think so. I think ferreting out detailed knowledge of one of the greatest comic artists of the century through his buried and ignored work repays all the sweat and frustration involved many times over. But you do have to go through all the trouble to find out that it is worth it.

It means bucking all your ingrained notions, based on what you've seen of newspaper comic strips over the past 30 years, to even get started. As you dig, you will discover the lost work of other gifted cartoonists as well: Herriman, Sterrett, Caniff, Tuthill, Gottfredson, Willard, Johnson, De Beck, Swiggins, Crane, Gross, Gray—but that of course, is another article—another book, in fact.

There is a mild time-travel effect in digging out the Segar strip (or others) in old newspapers. There is a dusty, archeological atmosphere stirred up as you delve through the yellowed pages that can be very exciting. And once found, the Segar panels themselves, like other great lost strips of the twenties and thirties, prove to be utterly timeless. The laughter with which you read them, the delight with which you pursue the stories and relish the characters are purely contemporary feelings—and the things you learn about the strip are frequently genuinely surprising.

Like its name. You wouldn't get very far if you started through those thousands of newspaper pages looking for a strip called *Popeye*. In fact, you'd never find it. For there is, and has always been, only *one* legitimate name for the Popeye strip, a name as little known since 1930 as Segar's is now. *Thimble Theatre* has been the sole name of the Popeye strip for a full 50 years. True, a few small-town papers actually labeled it *Popeye* when they took on the feature in the early thirties, but they were quickly called on the carpet by King Features and made to substitute the registered name, *Thimble Theatre*. It's a good name, an effective one, and the only sort of name that could adequately cover a strip so amorphous in character and direction in its formative years.


Many of the
cascade-old
newspapers
are literally the last minute
through the Hairbreadth Harry rescue ta
forts of the San Francisco Academy of
Comic Art, a non-profit research organiza
tion I founded about the time this article
was written, for the specific purpose of
saving
files of all
comics in complete sequence for every
one's convenience. Since then, as many of
you know, I've published two book collec
tions of the daily Popeye strip, both of
which are still in print, while I incorporated
the classic Sunday "Plunder Island" se
quence of 1934 into the contents of my
Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper
Comics, also still in print. (Data on these
books will be found at the close of this
article.)
Best of all to many readers may be the
news that the Academy, at 2850 Ulloa St.,
San Francisco, Ca. 94116 (415 681 7737)
can now provide them with as much as
they want of Segar's work from any date at
$30.00 a year (daily or Sunday) in com
plete reprint on 11" x 14" bond suitable for
binding, on request. (And this is true of al
most any other newspaper comic strip you
can think of. Write for details with—of
course—your self-addressed, stamped
envelope.)

Segar had no idea he was going to draw such a strip when he left Chester, Illinois (where he was born on December 8, 1894) to go to work at twenty on that notorious strip-of-many artists in the old Chicago *Record-Herald*, called *Charlie Chaplin's Comic Capers*. The *Capers* Sunday and daily strip (a generally unfunny work of a parasitic kind, later to become more popular as a type of strip in Great Britain than it would be in the U. S.) could have been a dead-end operation, but luckily for Segar, Chaplin withdrew his permission for the strip in 1917, and the *Record-Herald* suffered a financial heart attack in 1918 and was purchased, lock, stock, and cartoonist staff by the Hearst Chicago *America* and *Examiner*. Going to the afternoon *American* with Segar were such other ex-*Record-Herald* staffers as Frank Willard, later to achieve grubby fame as the creator of *Moon Mullins*, and Billy De Beck, who rode Barney Google's Spark Plug to fame and fortune a few hundred cartoon panels later.

For a year or so, Segar entertained the *American* readers with a daily cartoon review of new movies and plays on the paper's theatrical page, then was called to New York by Hearst (who had his main newspaper offices there). Hearst's New York papers had just lost the services of Ed Wheelan, who had created for their pages a strip burlesquing films of the time, called *Midget Movies* (which Wheelan would later retitle *Minute Movies* on his own hook). Hoping to develop a strip with similar popular appeal, Hearst asked Segar to do a daily comic based on stage melodrama, to run in the Hearst afternoon papers nationwide, and to be called *Thimble Theatre*. He apparently left specific details in Segar's hands—with results that were, of course, eventually world-shaking.

Almost immediately, *Thimble Theatre* appeared on one of the most widely read comic pages in America, Hearst's New York *Evening Journal* of 1919, and never left it as long as Segar lived. (Shortly after *Thimble Theatre* began, Hearst suggested that Segar begin a second strip, to appeal to the harassed suburban commuter who often missed his paper train, to be called *The Five-Fifteen* (later retitled *Sappo*). Segar's simplistic style looked deceptively easy , and Hearst may have decided, as he chuckled at the daily *Thimble Theatre* jape, that an artist with so easy a row to hoe could certainly be turning out at least one more strip for his money.)

Ham Gravy, his girl Olive Oyl, and the villainous, top-hatted Willy Wormwood were the comics who acted out Segar's first skits in *Thimble Theatre*. At first, these were little pseudo-melodramas, archly tongue-in-cheek, in the manner of Harry Hershfield's *Destructive Desmond* of a decade before; then they shifted, with the early departure of Willy Wormwood, to brief, blackout-style gags in which Olive or Ham jumped backward out of the last panel in dismay at what had happened or been said.

Ham played straight man to Olive but when Olive's brother Castor was introduced after a few months the real central personality and active protagonist of the strip took his bow. Castor, described by Olive as "batty" and "off the coop," quickly showed that he had earned his kooky reputation by being nervy and individual enough to follow his impulses toward pleasure and

BARRY THE BOOB
Barry Is Old for His Age
BARRY I'VE GOT A GREAT SCHEME TO GET THE RANGER'S HOUSE PLANS, IF WE SUCCEED WE'LL BE PROMOTED
PUT ON THOSE BABY CLOTHES AND ACT LIKE YOU'RE SIX MONTHS OLD. I'M GONNA LEAVE YOU ON THE RANGER'S DOOR STEP
WHEN YOU GET INSIDE SEE PRAISE IF WILL BE A CINCH TO GRAB THE PLANS AND STICK 'EM IN YOUR COAT
DA-DA
DA-DA
TELL MOCH DER RANGER THAT WILL MAKE A HIT WITH HIM AND WE'LL TAKE YOU INSIDE LEAVE THE REST TO ME
MOCH DER RANGER
MOCH DER RANGER
MOCH DER RANGER
MOCH DER RANGER
BY GOLLY! DOTS NOT I CALL A SMART KID
MOCH DER RANGER
HEY FRITZ! BRING IN THE 12 CIGARS AND SOME MILK ALSO BRING THEM AND A BOTTLE OF MILK
MOCH MA MAMA DA GOO-DA
PLANS
BOO-HOO THAT MUM CHILD MUST CHILD
WHO ISS DOT FRITZ?
A LADY YOUR RUM RUMPH HIGHNESS
PLANS
I TOOT MUM CHILD!! MUM CRUEL HUSBAND PUT HIS ON YOUR DOORSTEP
DOTS A SMART BABY HE KNOWS HOW TO MOCH ME
COME TO PAPA, DARLING
O BOY! THIS IS THE LIFE
BARELY YOU WOULDN'T STEAL YOUR LIL CHILD

A rare Segar *Barry the Boob* Sunday page from 12-12-17. Note the difference in Segar's early signature from the "cigar" signature that has become his trademark.

profit into highly unusual areas of activity. It is such adventurous behavior that precipitates not only comedy but narrative as well.

The continuing day-to-day story line common to many strips today evolved slowly in *Thimble Theatre*. Anything like that was rare in the comics of the early twenties—although Ed Whelan was attempting it in *Minute Movies*—and cartoonists usually linked their strips by moving their characters to new locations for awhile (Mutt and Jeff showed up in Pancho Villa's Mexico in 1911; Maggie and Jiggs travelled to China in 1920) or by providing a provocative theme (as George Herriman did in his early *Family Upstairs* strip, in which an apartment house family, the Dingbats, were driven crazy every day by their always futile efforts to get at least a *peep* at the weird and unseen "family upstairs").

Segar chose the latter method, and in a short time, *Thimble Theatre* became a series of increasingly longer themes, developed in daily punchlined episodes. By 1922, Segar was drawing actual continued stories and getting away with it through a masterful pacing of daily episodes that pro-

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POPEYE to battle Kid Klutch--the trained battling GORILLA!

vided both a laugh and a hooker to bring the reader back for another look the next day.

The technique of developing a theme soon became popular. And once the syndicates discovered that readers would keep buying papers simply to see what *happened* to a favorite character, regardless of whether they were handed a laugh or not, the modern adventure strip was only a short step away (a step taken by Roy Crane in his *Washington Tubbs II* strip of 1926, before most syndicates were quite ready for it).

Castor and Ham spent two years out West in the desert in one Sunday continuity adventure (March 4, 1928 to March 9, 1930—104 Sunday pages, 1700 panels). When it ended, Castor's wife (Cylinda Oyl) had divorced him for desertion and Popeye made his first Sunday appearance.

Fourteen months after Popeye first appeared on the daily *Thimble Theatre* stage, where he had become a public sensation, it was time for him to throw his Sunday punch. He did it effectively, in a knockdown, drag-out "fisk" fight with Ham Gravy over the alienated affections of Olive Oyl (who had fallen with virginal totality for the one-eyed sailor in Ham's absence).

Popeye was given no formal introduction by Segar, since the cartoonist assumed his readers were already familiar with his new hero from the daily strip. He credited them with enough imagination to understand that the two-year desert trek of Ham and Castor supposedly took place *after* their historic first meeting with Popeye in the January 17, 1929, daily strip, so that Popeye could have made out with the deserted Olive Oyl while Ham was gone.

The brief, fierce battle between Popeye and Ham on March 9, 1930—in which Olive herself was mauled unmercifully—climaxed and ended both the desert adventure *and* the long involvement of Ham in the strip. Already dropped as an obviously superfluous character in the daily strip, the lean, long-nosed vaudevillean vanished for good with this last, humiliating drubbing. It must be said in all frankness that he was not, this straightest of straight men, ever missed in the least (*certainly* not by Olive Oyl).

It may certainly seem odd to the modern reader, familiar as he probably is with some of the adolescent conventions of the comic books, to find that Popeye, the first comic superhero, did nothing in the least "super" for months after that first Sunday page.

Popeye's first act of this kind (outside of pretty casually winning some prizefights for Castor, a reasonable thing for a tough sailor to do), was to take one wall of a jail apart on June 25, 1930. After that, he did nothing especially spectacular until January 18, 1931, when he rather violently dismembered a hot dog stand. His next superstunt, part of a short narrative, was to kayo a gorilla in the ring on July 12 and 19, 1931. He then walloped a hole in a livingroom wall on August 2, 1931, wrecked another jail on January 24, 1932, and defeated a robot in a prizefight on April 24, 1932.

But two years of examples are enough. The pickings are meager and the pattern is clear. Even if we cite Popeye's comparative indestructability (he cannot be killed, but *can* be battered, crippled, and knocked loopy by sufficiently sizeable or tricky opponents) and mentioning his more astonishing feats (such as lifting an entire house

POPPA, I WANTS TO AST YA SUMPIN— HOW COME YOU AN' ME HAS BEEN SEPERATED SO LONG?
WELL, FORTY YEARS AGO WHEN YE WAS ABOUT TWO YEARS OLD I SENT YE OUT TO BUY ME A COB PIPE-
BUT YE DIDN'T COME BACK
I WAITED AN' WAITED, BUT YE DIDN'T COME BACK
SO I PACKS UP, GETS ABOARD ME SHIP AN' SAILS AWAY
YE BRAT!
FORTY YEARS AGO
DID YA WAIT A LONG TIME FOR ME TO COME BACK BEFORE YA SAILED AWAY AN' LEFT ME??
I SURE DID-
!
I WAITED TILL SIX O'CLOCK
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Material On Thimble Theatre Available From:

Thimble Theater Starring Popeye the Sailor
© 1971, King Features Syndicate, Inc. and Nostalgia Press, Inc. (Nostalgia Press $7.95)

NOSTALGIA PRESS INC. (Theater)
Box 293
Franklin Square, New York 11010

Thimble Theatre Introducing Popeye
A Complete Compilation Of The First Adventures Of Popeye: 1928–1930
©1977 by Hyperion Press, Inc. (Hyperion Press $8.95)

HYPERION PRESS
45 Riverside Avenue
Westport, Connecticut 06880

Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics
Published by Smithsonian Institution Press
Washington, DC 20560 $15.95

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or stepping out of a stalled "airplane" only to land on his chin after a fall of "thousings" of feet), it is evident that Segar's Popeye is only incidentally a superhero.

Any comic book superhero, after all, given a Sunday page for a similar two-year spread, would have saved sixteen universes, defeated thirty and a half supervillains, and had his mysteriously created and laundered supercostume replaced a dozen times.

Popeye—human, smelly, capable of disasterous mistakes, able to slug a woman, pursue likely looking chicks with lusty interest, swear a blue streak when "irrikated," able to be cheerfully cynical about almost everything dear to the proper, from patriotism to making money, and with a capacity to look as sloppy as he behaved—was certainly more of an *anti*-superhero than anything else. Yet it was his jaunty character and behavior that wowed the public and made them turn to *Thimble Theatre* first among the comics for a full decade.

Obviously, Popeye's underplayed invulnerability and superstrength could have been dropped (or never introduced) without the least effect on his popularity. His *toughness*, of course—his ability to take and deliver a beating—is quite another matter. The public adored and relished it. This vigorous display of Popeye's fighting competence, as a fundamental part of his character, was surely one of the prime reasons for the mass appreciation of *Thimble Theatre* in the thirties.

If Wimpy rambled into comic verse or Segar wrote of wild, interdimensional jungles known only to Jeeps, it may have been boring to some readers, but they still kept a close watch on the strip because of the always-imminent likelihood of yet another lengthy, panel-rocking, balloon-crushing battle between Popeye and some new, mountainous bruiser.

Segar himself obviously cherished these recurrent imbroglios, and a good part of his native genius lay in his ability to consistently render such obsessional violence in drawings that were at once exciting and funny. It is little wonder that he quickly came to have a deep affection for the one-eyed character who had so unexpectedly provided his drawing board with endless possibilities for pictorial mayhem—and in the process made him the most popular cartoonist on earth.

Despite the force and fury with which these gripping slugfests were drawn, the incredible fluidity of line encompassing the hurtling, slamming bodies and fists, and the wry humor of the sideline reactions and comments by other characters, it was not the fights or brutality that made the strip particularly impressive as narrative art. It was, rather, the people of the strip, the basic creations of Segar's mirth and poetry, who made it radiant with their presence, from the leads down to the most transient bit players.

Curiously, the most fully rounded, sensitively conceived and attractive character of the whole raucous crowd was not Popeye but the worthless, bumming, swindling, stealing, conniving, cowardly, hamburger-obsessed J. Wellington Wimpy. No central character of any other strip was lower or meaner than Wimpy—even Pete the Tramp, Happy Hooligan, and the Yellow Kid, though shiftless and thieving, had the hearts of gold essential to most popular low characters of the period.

Wimpy was only interested in Wimpy—and how the main chance could benefit Wimpy. His attractiveness rested on no virtue of any kind; he was without personal charm, and only the Sea Hag loved him. Yet we smiled on his entrance, guffawed at his behavior, and cherished his every word and gesture. He was literally a treasure of a character, a figure so inherently amusing and poetic that his essential ruthlessness—aimed, after all, at such innocuous ends as a square meal or a stolen kiss—was blunted and made part of his innocent appeal.

Not fully realized as a character until almost two and a half years after Popeye appeared in the strip, it was in Wimpy that we

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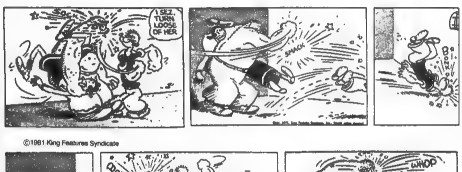
AW, WHAT THE HECK I'M GONNER QUIT FOOLIN' AROUN' AN' OPEN IT RIGHT NOW!
RATTLE
I STRONGLY ADVISE AGAINST OPENING A BOX CONTAINING A RATTLE SNAKE
I AIN'T SO SURE IT'S A RATTLER
?
!
WELL BLOW ME DOWN!
?
WHOOPEE, I ALWAYS WANTED A BABY!
FLOP
RATTLE
RATTLE



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found the true culmination of Segar's creative genius. Wimpy was the ultimate achievement of his art, and the most sorely missed comic figure in the genre, after the equally amoral and anarchistic Ignatz Mouse and his immortal inamorata, Krazy Kat.

One of Segar's greatest talents lay in phrase-making, and Wimpy provided him with his richest opportunities. After the great, self-assertive, manifesto of Popeye, echoed since by a million pairs of sympathetic lips, "I yam what I yam, an' tha's all I yam!" Segar's most memorable lines were murmured by Wimpy.

His classic wheedles, delivered and perfected over Rough-house's fly-blown lunch counter ranged from the optimistic "I'll gladly pay you Tuesday for a hamburger today," through the dodging "Let's you and him fight," to the deceptive "Come on up for a duck dinner; you bring the ducks."

The striking thing about these both brazen and tremulous suggestions, originally created simply to delineate and heighten the essntial Wimpiness of Wimpy himself, is that they are widely repeated today by millions who have never heard of Segar and who think of Wimpy as a simple clown for kids. They are now literally part of the language.

This is not suprising. The way a character spoke and framed his thoughts was as important to Segar as the way he was drawn. Certainly this was the case with Popeye. On his initial appearance in *Thimble Theater,* all of him—not just his face, as Olive specified—resembled a shipwreck. He had the grace of an oyster and the shape of its shell. But there was a light within the squinty, pipe-puffing sailor, and eventually Segar shaped Popeye's battered carcass and face to fit the light and the speech. His one-eyed near-masterpiece became a viable comic unit only after a while, but his dialogue was developed fully in his first adventure.

Everything was funny in that first escapade. It has been retold amusingly enough by Coulton Waugh, in his early, popular history of the strips, *The Comics,* but Waugh, oddly, omitted what is certainly the single most interesting aspect of Popeye's first "superheroic" demonstration of indestructability: its *external* source.

Popeye, in a days-long battle with a villain named Snork, was shot fifteen times, the last time directly in the chest at point-blank range. He crawled into the hold and lay there all night, passing in and out of comas, rubbing the head of the magic Whiffle Hen (Castor had brought her along because rubbing her head gave a man luck, and Caster used this power to win millions of pazoozies at a gaming casino of the China Coast). In the morning, Popeye reappeared on the deck to face Snork again.

It was June 10, 1929, and a superman was born. Castor cried, "Popeye! I thought you were shot!" Ogling him with contempt, Popeye pointed to his riddled chest. "Well, watcher think these is, button holes?" he asked.

Snork, flabbergasted by Popeye's reappearance, was quickly eliminated by Popeye's fists. Reader reaction brought Popeye back again in August, and he never left the strip again.

Obviously near death each time the Whiffle Hen revived him, Popeye had also rubbed the little creature's head to win at

I SEZ, YER GOIN' HOME WITH ME.
GET YER BLARSTED HOOKS OFFN ME NECK!!
COME HERE, OLIVE, I WANTS YA TO HOLD ME POPPA
WHILE I MAKES A CRATE TO PUT HIM IN
GEE, POPEYE, DO YOU THINK I CAN HOLD HIM?
SURE, YA KIN—HE'S ALMOST A HUNERD YEARS OLD
POP
WELL, BLOW ME DOWN!

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WHASA IDEA, HITTIN' OLIVE! MEAN, AIN'T SUSPOSED TO HIT WOMEN
I'LL HIT ANYBODY I WANTS TO HIT!
WHY, THE OLD GOAT! HE CAN'T HIT ME!
POP
HELP, POPEYE! HELP!

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WHAT'S IN STORE FOR POPEYE?

craps before his tussle with Snork. This sequence of events would seem to make Popeye invulnerability a direct result of the Whiffle Hen's magic. Without any other explanation in the strip to contradict it, the conclusion to be drawn is that Popeye rubbed himself enough luck out of the Whiffle Hen's head to survive not only Snork's bullets, but any number of later shootings, knifings, hangings, and beatings. (To those interested in superhero categories, this data removes Popeye from the company of "natural" super-heroes like Superman and places him with the "magical" ones like Captain Marvel)

Popeye's superstrength, on the other hand, doesn't seem to be involved. Not made a major point of display during this first adventure, it was later credited by Popeye himself to plain, garden-variety spinach—suggesting that the one-eyed sailor had some miraculous metabolic ability to assimilate the vegetable not just usefully which is hard enough for most people) but downright dynamically. Relishing the taste, Popeye sometimes devoured enormous quantities of the stuff when he felt particularly challenged in the ring.

By and large, however, spinach was given little emphasis in the strip (unlike the enervating focus of the film cartoons), and the huge statue of Popeye erected by spinach growers in Texas in the thirties was certainly more perseveringly earned by Max Fleischer than by Segar. (It was, of course, essentially a matter of imaginative priorities; Segar was only interested in gimmicks when they offered extensive or gag possibilities, and spinach was a dead end.)

So much for Popeye's "origins" as a superhero. They are, obviously, not nearly as important to readers familiar with the Segar character as the origins of the average comic book superhero are to *his* devotees. Segar himself, of course, was always interested in giving explanations and sources, on some level of fancy, of the supernormal phenomena in *Thimble Theater*. A storyteller above all, he carefully elaborated on the source and operation of each of the Jeep's miraculous abilities, accounted exotically for Toar's immense age, specified and localized the Sea Hag's magic, and invented and clothed in history and customs whole fantastic nations such as Goon Valley and the demons of Demonia.

Unlike the work of his successors on the strip, Segar's fantasies have no loose ends, no absurdities for the sake of absurdity. Segar was a master of the little-understood art of rational limitation in fantastic narrative, and this was primarily the thing (aside from his innate creativitiy and humor) that distinguished his strip from the versions that followed.

Segar—who apparently developed a strong interest in the western—turned a simple flower in the Sunday, May 12, 1935 episode into poetry—and poetry of a particularly ironic kind, in view of Segar's death a short time later. Popeye, Olive, Castor, and Swee'Pea, on their way to Slither Creek to dig for gold, become separated from Wimpy, who had also tagged along. Wimpy, suffering from a desert madness which causes those afflicted to roam around speaking in verse, stumbled across a blossom growing from the eyehole of a

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WHAT'S IN STORE FOR POPEYE?

CHAPTER FIVE
"THE SUNKEN CITY OF THE EIGHTH SEA"
IF WE TOUCH THE TREASURES OF THIS ANCIENT UNKNOWN CIVILIZATION—A TERRIBLE CURSE RUN
THAT LOOK CLOSE I'LL BET THERE ARE SPIRITS ALL AROUND US—PHOOEY!
SHUT UP, YA KNOWS I WON'S AFRAID OF GHOSHS! POPE DOWN!

steer skull. The quiet moocher had been days without food and was sure his number was up. Fixing his watery eyes on the flower, he swayed and began to recite what might as well be called—

J. WELLINGTON WIMPY'S
APOSTROPHE TO A DESERT DAISY

Oh, flower of death, so frail, so red,
Growing from a thing so dead—
Even as I will be quite soon—
Merely bones 'neath sun and moon

Oh, life—oh, death—so close akin,
Though death can't lose—life can't win;
For death is sure, but life—ah well,
'Tis not for me to break the spell
That binds all things in a mighty plan
That can't be changed by laws of man—

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It is just so, and so 'twill be,
Till the very end of Eternity—
So I cast my lot along with my kind,
And there'll be nobody above to remind—
Till the very end of Eternity—
So I cast my lot along with my kind, And there'll be nobody above to remind—
To remind the gatekeeper an' pass the tip
That J.. Wimpy was only a gyp.

But—shall you live? *You*—just a weed!
To scatter forth your worthless seed—
While I, creation's thing supreme,
Pass on to further nature's scheme?

Nay! Nay! Not so! I'll turn about—
I'm Fate today, you lowly sprout—
I'll pull you up, you little cuss—
Hah! Dust do dust the each of us!

Oh, desert daisy, so pure, so sweet,
You grew from soil that once was meat—
Aye, meat of my choice you chose for food.
Oh, why? —Why have I been so rude?

We both crave beef; we're unlike the others—
We're kindred souls; we may be brothers—
But I've killed you, my flower so bright,
Plucked you from your home so white.

Sorrow stills my desert madness,
Wild emotions turn to sadness—
But in my brain there is no lull,
For I picked you from your desert skull—

A skull your throne, whereupon you sat—
And the skull of a cow at that, at that—
And the skull of a lovely cow at that—
And the skull of a *lovely* cow at that—

L'ENVOI (as Mr. Wimpy collapses)
Plop!

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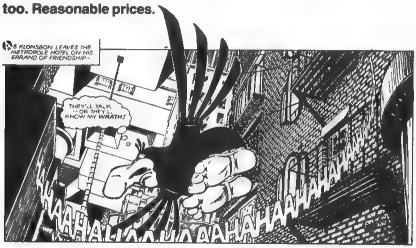

A KLINGON LEAVES THE METROPOLE HOTEL ON HIS BRAND OF FRIENDSHIP!
THEY'LL TALK ON THE OTHER SIDE KNOW MY WRATH!
AAAHAHAH

Photo: ©1981 Marcia Resnick

AN INTERVIEW WITH JULES FEIFFER

CONDUCTED BY MARK GASPER and STEVE RINGGENBERG

Jules Feiffer exists in two worlds. In one world, he examines and sees himself as part of the concerns, cares and expressions of the artistic, cultural and social elite. He is current. He has read or has at least skimmed all of the books, has seen all of the movies and is able to comfortably conduct an intelligent and knowledgeable conversation on almost any topic ranging from the current politics of the Reagan administration to George Herriman's Krazy Kat to the work of Arthur Miller (all of which he dislikes). He is at home in the cosmopolitan atmosphere and lifestyle of Manhattan, examined so often by Woody Allen.

In his other world, he still retains an almost innocent fascination with the workings of (for lack of a better term) mass culture or popular art—especially comics. By his own admission he is not familiar with much of the work currently being done in the form. But he remains an interested observer, continually compelled to return to the genres and forms of his childhood that spawned his own creative drive and to their modern day mass media equivalents (James Garner's portrayal of Jim Rockford/The Sport being one example).

Hanging on the living room walls of his sprawling Upper West Side Manhattan apartment is an original Frank King Gasoline Alley hand-colored Sunday page and two art prints by modern artists Steben Vicente and Susan Crile. Publicity posters of past productions of Feiffer plays at such prestigious institutions as The American Place Theatre, hang alongside a blowup of a Feiffer dancer and a framed crayon superhero sketch, produced on now-yellowed paper by a young boy growing up in the Bronx, spurred on by visions of becoming the next Milton Caniff or Joe Shuster.

Feiffer is perhaps the world's most successful comic art fan. As a child, he clipped and collected his favorite strips (including Al Capp's Li'l Abner, *which is now a bit of an embarrassment to the politically-leftist cartoonist because he could not bear to consign them to the garbage pail. There was no organized comic fandom to guide his "collecting", his actions were inspired out of a genuine love and admiration for the form and the work of his favorite cartoonists.*

When he began working for Will Eisner, Eisner *was both shocked and a bit fascinated that someone had followed his work as closely as Feiffer had. As many older comic fans will quickly testify, it was very rare to find anyone (including the comic pros themselves), who regarded comics as a serious art form before the middle 60's. But at some point in a childhood spent imitating the master cartoonists of the day, Feiffer began to believe that the comic art form could deal quite successfully with themes outside of the slapstick comedy, fantastic fantasy and high adventure genres.*

Feiffer eventually went on to create his own school of cartooning in pursuit of that belief. Feiffer, (the strip he created for the then burgeoning forum of the culturally disenfranchised—The Village Voice), has continued to challenge the "limits" of the comic art form for 25 years.

But Feiffer has not limited himself to comics. Returning to be continued to one artistic form or forum, he has written a number of highly-regarded novels, plays and screenplays. (A full index of Feiffer's work to date is included at the end of this interview). Indeed there are many people (like producer Robert Evans who chose Feiffer to write the Popeye screenplay, despite an ignorance of Feiffer's cartoon work), who do not identify "Feiffer—the cartoonist" with Feiffer—the serious writer" That is one result of co-existing in two artistic and cultural worlds.

There is a mercurial quality to Jules Feiffer's professional persona. He is involved in so many projects simultaneously that one wonders how he can successfully budget his time and channel his creative energies In the three months, it took to coordinate this interview, Feiffer signed with another newspaper syndicate to distribute Feiffer went on a promotional tour for Popeye, continued work on another as yet untitled original screenplay, signed with Knopf to publish a 25 year collection of his strips to publish a new collection each year, completed the creative work on Grownups *(a new play opening at Harvard this Spring), negotiated, finalized and then helped produce and edit a videotaped production of* Hold Me! *for cable TV's Showtime featuring Paul Dooley (which incidentally is highly recommended) and of course continued to write, draw and letter one Feiffer strip per week! Somewhere during that period, Feiffer also managed to get away for a one week vacation*

Jules Feiffer's two worlds are still separated by the popular perception and prejudice toward each world. But with more projects like Feiffer's most recent work, Popeye, *(which is not only faithful to the original Segar comic strip, but is generally successful as a film), perhaps that gap can be narrowed.*

(The following interview was conducted at Mr. Feiffer's home by Mark Gasper and Steve Ringgenberg, two weeks before the opening of Popeye. *Popeye has since become one of the year's biggest hits, despite opening to mixed reviews.)*

"It Is Far Easier To Create A Realitic Shoot Out Than a Realistic Relationship"

GASPER: *When did you decide you wanted to be a cartoonist?*

FEIFFER: Virtually at birth. I've been drawing since I was four.

GASPER: *How did you go about achieving that goal?*

FEIFFER: Well, my mother was a fashion designer. She made the living for the family. Because it was the Depression, my father was out of work a lot of the time. So, I guess the idea of a working artist in our family was normal to me. And cartoons were a very important part of my life: cartoons, old radio programs and old movies. All of them dealt with fantasy, all of them dealt with humor and adventure, and all of them dealt with neighborhoods that were not the Bronx, where I was brought up. So, all were preferable to the life I was leading at the time—a fantasy world, far-removed from my own. Later on newspaper strips and comic books were an ideal form of escape for a kid like me.

GASPER: *I understand you started drawing as a child. You created your own heroes and . . .*

FEIFFER: Well, I created my own heroes, but they were all based on other heroes. So if I had a cowboy, he wasn't named Buck Jones, he'd be named something else. And if I had a super character, he wouldn't be named Superman, he'd be named something else. But, they were clearly derivative.

In the early years, I wasn't sophisticated enough to try to draw in different styles. That sophistication came a few years later, when I started drawing (sometimes in the course of one day) 64 page comic books, which was then the size of comic books. I'd make up different characters, drawn by different cartoonists with different bylines. I'd try to draw one in Alex Raymond's style, another in **[Milton]** Caniff's style, another in **[Will]** Eisner's style and so on.

GASPER: *One could categorize your later work as being very leftist, or liberal or . . .*

FEIFFER: There's a difference.

GASPER: *Well, OK. But you're certainly not conservative, and you're certainly not middle-of-the-road.*

FEIFFER: No.

GASPER: *Coming from a Jewish family in the Bronx, were you exposed to a more radical sort of . . .*

FEIFFER: No. The neighborhood was radical, you know. It had a lot of radical politics in it and my older sister was radical. My family was conventionally liberal, but not leftist by any means. They were too frightened of their immigrant status to be leftists. My mother was expecting a pogrom at any moment. So that in the early days of pre-McCarthyism back in the late 40's, when the House Un-American Activities Committee was in full gear, and there'd be a political argument in the family, she'd be terrified and close all the windows.

Later on, when my cartoons started appearing in **The Village Voice** and they had a radical bent to them, she was quite

troubled. She had mixed feelings of confusion, fear and pleasure. Fear that I was going to get into trouble, pleasure that this work seemed to be successful and confusion as to how something that was so terrifying to her could be so warmly received and make me famous.

GASPER: *You once said that your only real experience as a kid was comics, that everything else was kind of a put-on. Do you still use comics as . . .*

FEIFFER: Not a put-on. I don't think I ever said that. Everything was less real to me. I couldn't engage in the world that other kids engaged in. I didn't see myself engaging in it. I saw myself in the earliest years biding time until I was a grownup and then I could do what I really wanted to do . . . **which was cartoons.**

GASPER: *Some of your major influences as a kid were Shelly Mayer and Roy Crane and Elzie Segar . . .*

FEIFFER: Yeah, but I don't know if Segar was consciously one at the time. You know it's interesting how Segar was an influence on Eisner and Eisner was a very powerful influence on me. And while Sheldon Mayer was somebody I loved, I don't think he was much of an influence. I loved **Scribbly** because I identified with it. David Levine and I have often talked about that. Both of us were big **Scribbly** fans and both of us were boy cartoonists. But I wouldn't say visually, or even in terms of humor, that Mayer influenced my work. Mayer was drawn to slapstick. And while I thought he was wonderful, and still think he's wonderful, it was not a direction I was drawn to. No, **[Al]** Capp's class-conscious bufoonery was important to me as a kid. I saved Capp's strips. I still have plenty of old Al Capp strips from 1939–40. Caniff was also terribly important.

RINGGENBERG: *How about [George] Herriman's Krazy Kat?*

FEIFFER: I never got it and don't get it to this day. I don't understand it. I love the drawings, but I liked the drawings on **archy and mehitabel** better. I don't think I've ever read a **Krazy Kat** (and I've tried over the years) that didn't make me feel that I was reading Chinese. I don't believe"it's nearly as good as Segar's work, though I think Herriman draws wonderfully. As an animal strip, I don't think it came near **Pogo**, but this is a minority opinion, as disreputable as not liking **[William]** Faulkner, who I also don't understand.

RINGGENBERG: *I'll go along with that.*

GASPER: *What was it like being a comic book artist during the early days of comics? Was swiping considered an art?*

FEIFFER: Well, I was always on the periphery? I never made it into comics, ever. I was not considered good enough to work even among the hacks. And don't think I didn't try. I tried very hard to be a hack. I didn't qualify, so I had to find something else to do in the field. What I blundered into simply took advantage of those talents that I had, because I didn't have the talents that I really wanted.

GASPER: *How did you actually begin working for Eisner?*

FEIFFER: I had been an Eisner fan from the days of **Muss-Em-Up Donovan.** So that this man should offer me a part-time job at $10 a week was earth shaking.

I showed him some samples of something I was trying to sell and he told me that, "This is terrible on every level." On the other hand I seemed to know more about **The Spirit** and Eisner's career, than any living human, so of course he was fascinated by that. I was the only one in the office at that time who was a true devotee. The others were all professionals and they all had their own careers very much in mind. As of course did I, but for later, some time in the future. I was the one passionate Eisner man in the office. If he would have had it, I would have been his retinue, his entourage.

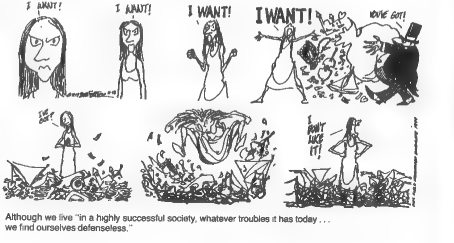
At first he had me erasing pages and doing blacks and doing borders. Then he tried me on backgrounds and I was terrible. I couldn't draw them in Eisner's style or anything that bordered on that look. Completely pathetic. I can look at old **Spirits** today for the pen and brush lines that look weak and soupy. Those are mine.

RIGGENBERG: *But didn't you say in* ***The Great Comic Book Heroes*** *that you were better at Eisner's signature than he was?*

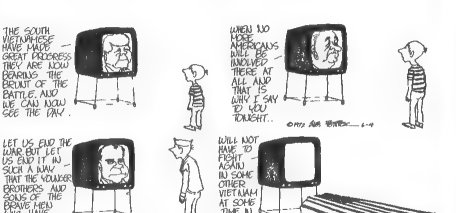
FEIFFER: Yeah, that I could do terrifically! Eisner like me because I was smart and

FEIFFER

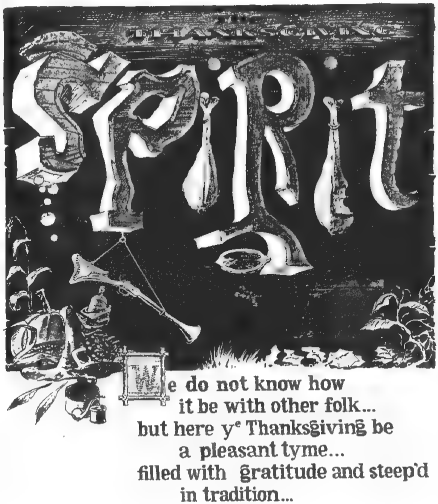
©1961 Jules Feiffer



Although we live "in a highly successful society, whatever troubles it has today . . . we find ourselves defenseless."


THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE HAVE MADE GREAT PROGRESS THEY ARE NOW BEARING THE BRUNT OF THE BATTLE, AND WE CAN NOW SEE THE END.
WHEN NO MORE AMERICANS WILL BE INVOLVED THERE AT ALL AND THAT IS WHY I SAY TO YOU TONIGHT..
LET US END THE WAR, BUT LET US END IT IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE YOUNGER BROTHERS OF THE BRAVE MEN WHO HAVE FOUGHT
WILL NOT HAVE TO FIGHT AGAIN IN SOME OTHER VIETNAM AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE.

During the Viet Nam War, the pressure of keeping topical with a six week lead time was not as strong.



FIRST PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 20, 1949 ©1981 Will Eisner

The splash page from "The Thanksgiving Spirit" which is the altered version of Feiffer's Chrstmas war between Macy's and Gimbel's (his "sendup of corporate greed") that finally appeared.

could talk intelligently about the stuff. We'd sit for hours and discuss **The Spirit.** There was kind of an edge to these conversations because my argument was that Eisner was selling out Eisner. That the Eisner of '46 wasn't as good as the Eisner of '41, that he didn't have the interest in it that he had once had and that he clearly wanted to go into other things. I felt that this was some kind of betrayal. Only with the arrogance of the post-adolescent did I dare spout this stuff. And it never occurred to me that I was being offensive. Why Eisner stood for all this abuse, without kicking me out, I don't know.

But, eventually, he got pissed off with me for putting down the stories he was writing and said, "Well, if you think you can do something better, you go write one." It seemed to me that there was no question that I could write better in Eisner's style of '39–40 than he could, **or wanted to.** So I wrote a couple of stories and Eisner liked them. From that point on, I was the writer in the house and ended up writing most of them.

Although, when I look back at the stuff now, that seems less clear. It really looks like it was more of a collaboration than I chose to remember. I do remember that we worked well together.

GASPER: *You did some work for Eisner in* ***Baseball Comics*** *and* ***Kewpie Comics****?*

FEIFFER: Yes, that was really my try-out for writing **The Spirit.**

GASPER: *Who did you work with, besides Eisner, Tex Blaisdell and Lee Aimes?*

FEIFFER: Tex only came in as the illustrator. As far as I can recall he had nothing to do with the story.

A very important guy in the office was Eisner's lettering and background man, Abe Kanegson. Abe was also something of an editor and in many ways he was my mentor—even more so than Eisner at a certain period. So that when I would try to get away with something that I thought was good enough, it would never pass Abe. He would force me to go back and rework stuff and force my standards to refine themselves. Also working for Eisner at that time was Marilyn Mercer who had a tough, critical intelligence. We were all very good friends.

GASPER: *Were you the only other writer on* ***The Spirit*** *besides Eisner? Or were there other people?*

FEIFFER: I think that over the years he had tried one or two writers. Nobody worked out. I think he said that I was the only one who knew how to write it, besides himself, and I did it from about '47, I guess, until I got drafted in 1951. I also did some while I was in the Army.

GASPER: *In other interviews you've mentioned the influence of certain writers —Cornell Woolrich, James M. Cain and Ring Lardner.*

FEIFFER: Well, only in terms of the **Spirit** stories—not in terms of anything else I've written. You know Eisner picked from Lardner also. He did at least one version of Lardner's **Haircut.** These were just wonderful short story writers who were terrific models for the eight page comic strip.

GASPER: *Since you had to put out one of these a week, were there any other people you drew upon, other short story writers?*

FEIFFER: Not short story writers so much as radio shows that I admired, like the **Suspense** show that was on at the time. A lot of the sound stuff I wrote for Eisner came out of the remarkable use of sound effects that were being used by William Spier on **Suspense** shows of the 40's.

GASPER: *Your politics are, I assume, a bit more to the left than Eisner's. At the time he was doing* ***The Spirit****, I guess he was trying to be a good businessman rather than to deal with political stories. I was wondering if this led to any problems between the two of you, when you began taking an active role in writing* ***The Spirit****?*

FEIFFER: Well, it did from time to time, but I don't think Eisner's politics were modified by business interests. I think his politics were always a kind of general, modified liberalism, and so far as I know, remain that to this day. But mine were always considerably more to the left. Both of us are rigid enough not to change easily.

But that was never a serious problem. Not too long ago I came across a story I did on the Indo-China war before America was involved. I remember seeing an article in **Time** magazine, which reported that the

French Foreign Legion which was fighting the Vietnamese was partly composed of ex-Nazis—Germans who had fled and in their exile had joined the Foreign Legion. So here we had these Nazis fighting an imperial war, on the side of the United States and the French. And I thought that was rather shocking and also very interesting in terms of a story. So I did a story on it. Since I made it work as part of the story and it didn't seem like propaganda—which of course it was—there was no problem with it.

Other times, when my politics simply came on too strongly (and this was, after all, Eisner's cartoon), he would make me modify it or cut it out entirely. And I don't think—unless I'm rewriting history—that I minded very much. In fact, as I recall, I was delighted when I was able to get away with something. When I wasn't, I'd wait until next time.

Only once was there any real trouble about it. My great joy was when **The Spirit** was picked up by **The New York Daily Compass**, which was the only New York paper to run the strip. There was a small paper in Parkchester in the Bronx that carried it, but I think that had gone out of business by this time. Anyway, **The Spirit** had never run in New York.

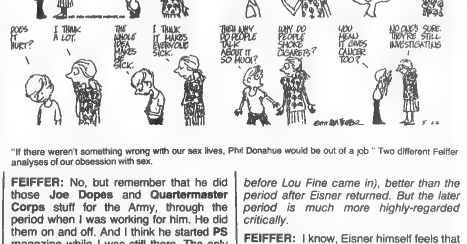
The Daily Compass was the successor to **PM**, which was a leftist liberal paper and its successor **The Star**, which was famous for nothing except introducing Walt Kelly as a political cartoonist by running **Pogo**. That of course was quite fabulous, but other than that **The Star** wasn't much of a paper. Then the paper was bought by a man named Ted O'Thackery who renamed it **The New York Daily Compass** and gave a lot of space to people like I.F. Stone. It developed into a strong left-wing paper, became the voice of the Progressive Party and picked up **The Spirit**.

Now this was the paper I read all the time. It was my paper, it was the paper whose political interests were identical to my own. And for **The Spirit** to be in this paper . . . I was in heaven. So I wrote a Christmas Spirit story in which there was something going on between Macy's and Gimbel's and Santa Claus. I don't remember what the hell it was all about, but it was really a send-up of corporate greed around Christmas time. And as far as I was concerned, this was a tough political statement, exposing capitalism for what it really was.

But to my surprise and chagrin, **The New York Daily Compass** read the story and immediately dropped **The Spirit** because it didn't want to lose its Macy's and Gimbel's ads. So here I was, assaulted by my own left. I was made to cut a lot of stuff in the story to retain the paper. It pissed me off at **The Compass** and pissed Eisner off at me.

GASPER: *Was there a problem between you and Eisner after he began working for the Army? He began doing these . . .*

Feiffer
©1981 Jules Feiffer
THE MORAL MAJORITY IS SUPPORTING A CONGRESSIONAL AMENDMENT AGAINST SEX.
WHAT ABOUT PROCREATION?
OUR AMENDMENT IS PRO-LIFE AND PRO-CREATION.
BUT WHERE WILL BABIES COME FROM?
THE STORK!
THE STORK DOESN'T BRING BABIES. SEX BRINGS BABIES.
DON'T BE DUPED BY THE EVOLUTIONISTS. SEX BRINGS MORAL DECAY. SEX BRINGS PORNOGRAPHY AND IMMORALITY AND HOMOSEXUALITY AND ABORTIONS AND HORRORS.
PRAISE THE STORK! PRAISE THE STORK! PRAISE THE STORK!
STORK-TALK. IT'S THE ONLY LANGUAGE THEY UNDERSTAND.


WHAT'S SEX?
IT'S THE THINGS THEY DO TO GET US.
DO THEY LIKE IT?
IF WE GROW UP INTO THE REAL WORLD IT'S LIKE GOING TO WAR. OR WORSE. OR BECOME PAK.
DOES SEX LIKE IT?
YOU MAKE YOURSELF IT'S LIKE PRETENDING TO LIKE ORGANIC VEGETABLES BECAUSE THEY'RE GOOD FOR YOU.
IS IT GOOD FOOD?
NO ONE'S SURE THEY'RE STILL INVESTIGATING
DOES IT HURT?
A THINK A LOT.
THE WHOLE WORLD HATES EVERYONE SICK.
I THINK IT HANGS EVERYONE SICK.
THEN WHY DO PEOPLE KEEP ON ABOUT IT SO MUCH?
WHY DO PEOPLE KEEP ON ABOUT CIGARETTES?
YOU MEAN IT GIVES CANCER TOO?
NO ONE'S SURE. THEY'RE STILL INVESTIGATING

"If there weren't something wrong with our sex lives, Phil Donahue would be out of a job." Two different Feiffer analyses of our obsession with sex.

FEIFFER: No, but remember that he did those **Joe Dopes** and **Quartermaster Corps** stuff for the Army, through the period when I was working for him. He did them on and off. And I think he started **PS** magazine while I was still there. The only problem was that he knew that I strongly differed with him politically on this stuff. And I think we argued about it once or twice —his views were always different from mine. Obviously I was upset by somebody I regarded so highly doing work for this military monster. But I chose to overlook it. I mean, what else could I do about it? I didn't want to blow up his office or call him a fascist pig. I loved the man. It was just something we were in disagreement about and no doubt still are.

GASPER: *You said before that you liked the pre-war* ***Spirit*** *(which is the period before Lou Fine came in), better than the period after Eisner returned. But the later period is much more highly-regarded critically.*

FEIFFER: I know, Eisner himself feels that the later period is better. It's hard for me to judge this, simply because I was so involved in it. But I know that at that time, the ones I enjoyed looking at were the earlier ones. Now, when I go back as I infrequently do, of course I have a greater interest in those later years because those were the years when I was working on the strip. But —and this is also subjective—those early **Spirits** meant much more to me than simply a comic strip. It was some kind of lifeline to other worlds and better worlds than the one I was presently occupying. So, my point here is that this is something on which my judgement is not to be trusted

FEIFFER
©1961 Jules Feiffer
I'M CONSUMED BY NOSTALGIA
NOT FOR MY CHILDHOOD BUT FOR BUDDY HARROW'S CHILDHOOD.
NOT FOR MY WIFE BUT FOR LOIS STOLOFF AND FAY HOLDEN AS MY PARENTS
YES W
NOT FOR MY OLD GIRL FRIENDS BUT FOR JUDY GARLAND AND ALAN RUTHERFORD AS MY GIRL FRIENDS.
NOT FOR THE BROOKLYN BUT FOR #1 SHADY LANE, JUST OFF MAIN STREET SHALLVILLE, U.S.A.
I DOUBT ONE FOR REAL FAST.
I PINE FOR MY HIGH PAST.

Two examples of Feiffer's style. At the top is an example of his earlier work when he would pencil and then ink the drawings. In the bottom cartoon (a much more recent strip) he just used a pen. Note the use of fewer words in the second cartoon

neccessarily.

GASPER: *Maybe it was simply because the strip was being formulated, that it wasn't a formula yet and was still developing.*

FEIFFER: That's a very good point. Also it was all new—nobody had ever seen anything like this before. By the time '46 came around we knew what it was. While we kept refining it, the way he told the story, the way he used time, the way he used sound, the way he used layout, the way his characters interacted was already established. But that was quite a revelation at the time he began the strip. The way he'd have characters talking out front to the audience and introduce the stories as if they were on stage was an idea I picked up and have been running with for 25 years.

GASPER: *Why did Eisner—why did both of you stop working on* **The Spirit***?*

FEIFFER: Well, I stopped working on it because eventually you graduate from school and want to go on to your own stuff. And **The Spirit** stopped being fun. I mean it was just a matter of development and ambition.

I think that Eisner at the time felt that he had outgrown it. You know, he didn't have nearly the appreciation of his work that he does now. After he was picked up by fans and became a cult, he really began to see how important his work was. He obviously always took his work seriously, but I don't think he knew that he was something important. In the years when I was there, he tended to dismiss **The Spirit**. It wasn't what he really wanted to do.

GASPER: *What did he want to do?*

FEIFFER: He wanted to be a publisher of magazines. He wanted to be a businessman. Remember that in those years, comics was a shabby business. It was in no way considered an art form, or close to an art form. If one was serious about one's reputation, you got out of comics. You might do a syndicated newspaper strip—a form more highly regarded—but best of all would be magazine illustration. I mean that was serious.

And certainly no one with any real credentials ever wrote for comic books. Unheard of! And if one did, one buried it, one hid it. So if you wrote for comic books and went on to write scripts for B movies, you could boast that you wrote B movies, but you'd never talk about your comic book background. So it was a whole other world at that time.

GASPER: *Now after* **The Spirit***, if I have my facts right, you became an animator at Terrytoons?*

FEIFFER: Oh, well I did a lot of hack jobs after getting out of the Army in '53. I fell into the pattern of holding down an art studio job, to make a living for six months until I had 26 weeks of employment behind me and then arrange to get myself fired so I could collect unemployment for six months and work on what I really wanted to do. And what I really wanted to do were cartoon books of social and political satire, which I would then either work hard on, or not. A lot of the time I spent chasing after girls and getting drunk and stuff like that.

GASPER: *Did the McCarthy hearings have any direct effect on you because of your political views and your working, at the time, in comics which were supposed to be for kids?*

FEIFFER: No.

McCarthy's heyday was while I was in the Army. I suppose there was a residual effect of McCarthyism on my work. I wrote the story **Munro** while in the Army. My inability to sell it, for two or three years after, had something to do with the repressive atmosphere in the country that McCarthy lent his name to. So that at one point UPA was thinking of buying it to animate and then they got scared off politically. But, it was still a few years to go before I'd start my strip in **The Voice**. By that time, that kind of pressure, in its most heinous form was modified. It wasn't over. There were still blacklists—the blacklist lasted for many years. But the thought police were beginning to be on the defensive for the first time.

GASPER: *What made you offer your services to* **The Village Voice** *for free?*

FEIFFER: There was nobody left. Nobody would have me. By that time I had done three or four of these long books, one of which was **Passionella**. **Munro** was another. Another book called **Sick, Sick, Sick**, ran in **Playboy** some years later as "The Oddball." And I thought this work was as good as any I would ever do. I was very

pleased with it. It seemed to me quite original, I didn't know anybody who was doing stuff like this. The friends I showed it to were all excited by it, but no publisher would go near it. What editors generally told me, when I showed this work was, "We love it. We think it's wonderful. But of course, it's too sophisticated and we wouldn't know how to sell it." And I said, "Wait a minute. It's not more sophisticated than Steinberg, is it? Or Steig? Or Thurber?" And they'd say, "No, but they are known and you're not." So, my problem was that in order to get published, I first had to get famous.

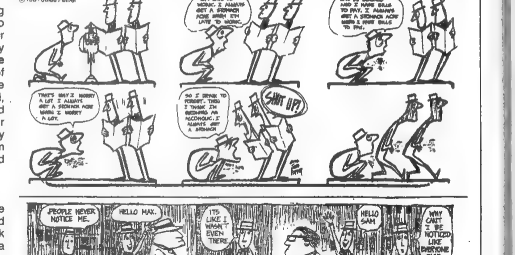
RINGGENBERG: *Catch 22.*

FEIFFER: And so I had to figure out some way short of committing murder that would make me famous, so I could get my work published. And the **Voice** was just about a year old and I had become aware of it—the way people generally become aware of something that's new and fresh. I realized that it was developing a middlebrow audience, exactly the audience that would make publishers think that I was commercial. In other words: there were 25 of their friends reading it and they were in the publishing trade and they were in the advertising trade and they were members of the burgeoning middle class—soon to be upper middle class—and I get 5 or 6 of those guys who are reading me in the **Voice** mentioning me in P. J. Clarkes to an editor friend and they suddenly say, "This guy's hot!"

GASPER: *They may be the only 5 or 6 people that are reading it . . . .*

FEIFFER: That's right. So quite cynically I went to the **Voice** in order to become famous. And I figured it might take a year or two because I thought the work would take time to develop and find its audience. The original idea was to serialize the longer works (**Munro, Passionella**), break them down into continuity and run them.

The editors of The **Voice**, Dan Wolfe, Ed Fancher and Jerry Tallmer—John Wilcock was also on the paper then—didn't care what I did. Basically, the paper was open to its contributors. It was a contributors' paper. Nothing had existed like that before. In the past, if you worked for **The New Yorker**, you wrote in the **New Yorker** style, much as it likes to deny that there is a **New Yorker** style. The same is true for **Esquire** or any publication. The **Voice**'s style was the style of its contributors. So the agreement made with the **Voice** was that its contributors could do anything they wanted to do. But they would not get paid, because the **Voice** had no money to pay contributors. But you were allowed to say the things you weren't allowed to say in any other publication. So Nat Hentoff could only write jazz for commercial publications and the **Voice** would allow him to write about politics. The editor of a political journal would say, "Hentoff, you're a jazz writer. What the hell do you know about politics?"



The first (October 26, 1956) and third "Feiffer" strips to appear in *The Village Voice*. When they both appeared, the strip was named *Sick, Sick, Sick* to give it the exposure he needed to sell the story to a publisher. Note that the drawing style of the early strips is reminiscent of Harvey Kurtzman's *Hey Look* period.

And so on down the line. The **Voice** was this incredible forum for writers and artists who found themselves straitjacketed and forced, in order to make a living, to do work that they might do well, but was not of real interest to them, or did not represent the sum of their interests.

So I considered that a very good deal and in no way exploitive. Besides it was clear to me that sooner or later this was bound to end in big bucks.

But to initiate the reader into the sort of approach I was taking I decided to write some introductory strips for four or five weeks, complete in themselves and then launch into the longer stories. It turned out the introductory strips were far in advance of the stories I wanted to run, and so I kept doing them. I never got to the other stuff.

GASPER: *The way you describe the* **Voice**, *it must have been a very exciting place to be.*

FEIFFER: Enormously. Just before I joined it they had [**Norman**] Mailer doing a weekly column that put people up in arms. The Mailer that evolved into the Norman Mailer we all know, was just then developing. That first development was in the pages of **The Village Voice**. I mean, up 'till then he was a failed novelist who had made a big success with **The Naked and the Dead**, written a failed novel called **Barbary Shore** and was out of it. He started writing these weekly columns which were in many ways the earliest examples of personal journalism and he got people very excited and very angry. And basically that's what the **Voice** did, it got people worked up. So, there was a lot of energy.

Jerry Allmer, who was the back of the book editor was, I believe, virtually the first theater critic to go to Off-Broadway plays, start reviewing them seriously, and treating them as important.

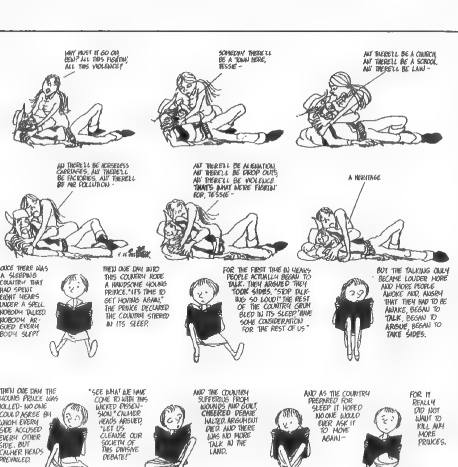
So, much of what later developed in the 60's with the Underground press was initiated by the **Voice**. But by that time the **Voice** had become more staid and flabbier.

GASPER: *Yeah, and making money.*

FEIFFER: That's always part of it.

GASPER: *What was the early reaction to the* **Feiffer** *strip? Did you have a hard time finding an audience or . . . .*

FEIFFER: No. It was just the opposite. I thought it would take a year before the strip took off. It took three months, before the end of the first year, I was in **The London Observer**. It was my second paper, and I was better known in England that I was in the States because **The Observer** had a far wider and more influential circulation


WHY MUST IT GO ON BEING ALL THIS FIGHTING ALL THIS VIOLENCE?
SOMEBODY THREATS BE A TOWN HERE, BRUCE—
AH! THREATS BE A CHURCH, AH! THREATS BE A SCHOOL, AH! THREATS BE LAND—
AH THREATS BE NOBLENESS, CHIVALROUS, AH THREATS BE EXCITEMENT, AH THREATS BE VIOLENCE!
AH THREATS BE AN AGITATION! AH THREATS BE GROUP OUTS, AH THREATS BE VIOLENCE! THINGS WHAT WERE TERRIBLE! BOY, TO SEE—
A HERITAGE
ONCE THERE WAS A SLUMBROUS COUNTRY THAT HAD GREAT EVENT WEARS UNDER A SPELL. HORDUM DUSTED. HORDUM, AS-SURED EVERYM BODY'S SLEPT
THEN ONE DAY INTO THIS COUNTRY ROSE A HANDSOME HOUND PRINCE. IT'S TIME TO GET HOVERS AWAY. THE PRINCE DECIDED THE COUNTRY STORED IN ITS SLEEP.
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY PEOPLE ACTUALLY BEGAN TO TALK. THEY ARGUED. THEY TOOK SIDES. "SLEEP RULE- HAS SO LONG!!! THE REST OF THE COUNTRY CRIED IN ITS SLEEP! "MAKE SOME CONSIDERATION FOR THE REST OF US."
BUT THE TALKING QUICK BECAME LOUDER MORE AND MORE PEOPLE AWOKE AND AGAIN THAT THEY HAD TO BE AWAKE, BEGAN TO TALK. BEGAN TO ARGUE. BEGAN TO TAKE SIDES.
THEN ONE DAY THE WORDS PEACE WAS KILLED. NO ONE COULD AGREE ON WHICH EVERY SIDE ACCUSED EVERY OTHER SIDE. BUT CALMER HEADS PREVAILED.
"SEE WHAT WE HAVE COME TO WITH THIS WICKED ENGLISH SAID CALMER HEADS ABRUPT. "LET US CLEANSE OUR TEETH OF THIS OFFENSIVE DERIVATIVE"
AND THE COUNTRY SUFFERED FROM WORKERS AND SOLDIERS CHILDREN'S DISEASE WALKED ABOUT AND THERE WAS NO MORE TALK IN THE LAND.
AND AS THE COUNTRY PREPARED FOR SLEEP IT HOPED NO ONE WOULD EVER AGE IT TO HAVE AGAIN—
FOR IT REALLY DID NOT WANT TO KILL AGAIN MORE PEOPLES.
©1981 Jules Feiffer

One common Feiffer approach is the exaggereated use of allegory.

than the **Voice**. And so, I'd go to cocktail parties and be introduced to Englishmen who said, "Now isn't it odd that you have the same name as that wonderful English cartoonist Feiffer. Are you familiar with his work?"

GASPER: *Did you get your "visual shorthand" cartooning style from the early comic books?*

FEIFFER: I don't know where I got it from. I was always most interested in action and effect and tried to translate that on to the page. Impression interested me more than detail. And in terms of personal style, I don't see backgrounds. I mean I can be in somebody's house for years (my own for example) and not know what color the walls are. I notice the foregrounds, I notice how people sit, I notice how they move, I notice the expressions on their faces, what happens in their eyes and I can read their minds from time to time. But, as for what they're wearing, I'll be damned if I know. If somebody asked me after you guys leave, if you were wearing suits, I probably couldn't answer. If you drove off in a car, I wouldn't know what the hell you drove. When I was a kid everybody was car crazy. To me a car was a car. I didn't understand how anybody could tell one car from another, or one plane from another. It seemed some kind of miracle to me. I didn't understand it at all. So, these are things I was never trained to observe and don't observe to this day. So that the drawing style, the sketchiness, the fastness is basically me putting down exactly what I see, **that's everything** I see.

GASPER: *Have any of your strips been made into an animated film?*

FEIFFER: **Well Munro** was.

GASPER: *Did you have anything to do with the film?*

FEIFFER: Yeah, I mean simply on a consulting basis. Two of the guys that I worked with at Terrytoons—Al Kouzel and Gene Deitch—turned it into a film. And it won the Academy Award. A few years earlier this story was considered so dangerous that I couldn't sell it because it was anti-military. By the time the 60's rolled around, it was considered so benign—these being pre-Vietnam days—that it was safe enough to do in pure form and show at Radio City Music Hall. A few years later, in the depths of Vietnam, it once again became subversive.

GASPER: *What prompted you to write* ***The Great Comic Book Heroes****? Was it to pay some sort of debt you may have felt to Will Eisner?*

FEIFFER: No, it wasn't that. There was an editor at the time at Dial Press whose name was E. L. Doctorow—who later became known for one or two other things—who called me up and said, "I have this idea to put together a book of old comic book stuff, old comic book superheroes and I think you're the only one to write it and edit it. You're the only one I know who knows anything about this stuff." I grabbed at it. You know, I didn't want to write a history, I wanted to write a personal memoir of what old comics meant to me. Doctorow was a marvellous editor to work with. We had a good time with it. I loved doing that book. I loved it so much that I put aside three months to work on it and asked and got three months worth of money in advance and then took nine months to put it together. But, that was the first, so far as I know, the first book done on comic book heroes.

GASPER: *There may have been one history done in the 40's*

FEIFFER: On comic books?

GASPER: *Yeah. I think Coulton Waugh . . .*

FEIFFER: Oh no, that was different. Coulton Waugh . . .

GASPER: *Yeah, that was just strips, wasn't it?*

FEIFFER: He just touched on comic books. You see comic books were really held in contempt. The strips were taken seriously. Waugh's book deals in strips, as does Thomas Craven's book, **Cartoon Cavalcade**, before that. I think he had one chapter on comic books and even that is mostly devoted to the strip reprints and may have touched on Superman briefly, but didn't do much with it.

GASPER: *Do you have any feelings about* ***[Dr. Frederick]*** *Wertham's book* ***Seduction of the Innocent*** *or his theories?*

FEIFFER: I was not unsympathetic to Wertham's views on comic book violence but I opposed the censorship he apparently favored. And he misunderstands so much! The way he writes about Batman and Robin being homosexual . . . .I'm kind of mocking about that in **The Great Comic Book Heroes**. There's a Wertham quote that I use in the book about comic books being demonstrably trash because true literature, serious children's books, the **real** stuff passes on from generation to generation and quite clearly, comic books don't last at all. They don't stand the test of time. And where is Dr. Wertham today? Outlasted by comic books.

GASPER: *Well, that leads into my next question, because he's involved with the anti-violence television campaign. What are your feelings about anesthetizing violence on television for children?*

FEIFFER: I'm against censorship and I'm against violence. Censorship is, itself, an act of violence. TV violence, movie violence

have to do with technique outdistancing other aspects of the art, becoming superior to story or superior to character. Violence is the grabber, the selling point, the sole reason to watch, because our entertainment industries are in the hands mainly of the fast buck artists and the least complicated way of making a buck is sensationalizing. Exploiting our worst, our most fearful our most blatant instincts. Exploiting our blood lust and our lust lust. Audiences are educated in violence. It has become what we are most literate in. And as the audience gets sated with violence on one level, technique improves, stylization improves, the technocrats of violence raise the ante. We are educated one step upward. And it is justified. "This is what the people want." So fist fights and gun fights get bloodier and louder. Death in Dolby. Color is fantastic. Blood spurts further and looks redder. And it is far easier to create a realistic shootout than a realistic relationship. And relationships don't sell. Unless it's fucking. Fucking and fighting sell. Fucking and death.

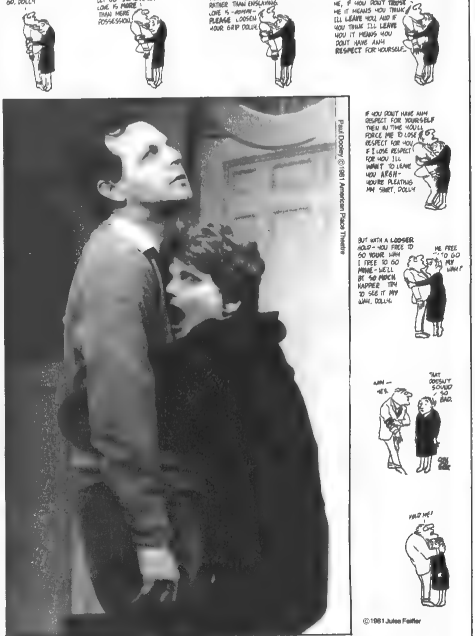
So censor it. Is that how you fix society? Is that how you improve art? You police it? Well, there's no question, that some first rate art has come out of authoritarian societies, but if Hollywood turned out better work in the 50's under McCarthyism, I'm unaware of it. Whatever our problems today—and God knows, they are endless and awful—our history shows that America doesn't prosper spiritually or morally under repression.

GASPER: *Did you become involved in theater from working at the* **Voice** *and being exposed to all the different ideas and people that became a part of that paper?*

FEIFFER: No. It seems to me that all of the moves I've made in different career directions were backed into and never plotted.

My first theater experience came because of a group in Chicago called the Second City. Their work was very close to my own, it was a satiric cabaret. Brilliant, just brilliant performers and a brilliant director named Paul Sills. They were going to open up a second theater in which they were planning to use playwrights. Up until then they had always improvised and written their own stuff. They wanted their first work to be an adaptation of my strips. Sills asked me at one point to write something special for the evening because he was afraid that doing a whole evening of cartoons running a minute or less, was going to be monotonous. So in one night I wrote a one act play called **Crawling Arnold**. it was my first attempt at writing dramatically and it just wrote itself. It was just a ball to do.

But, for what I considered tactical reasons I didn't go on to write plays because while I loved it, I felt that if I ever wrote a play I really liked, it would close in a week. And I didn't think of myself as a masochist. In fact, the state of the theater was such, that nothing I would write could possibly be


PLEASE LET GO, DOLLY
YOU'VE GOT TO LET GO SOMETIME! LOVE IS WHERE I THINK MORE THAN POSSESSION!
LOVE IS GIVING RATHER THAN TAKING, FREEING RATHER THAN ENSLAVING. LOVE IS—AHHH—I'LL BLEEAK. LOOKIN' YOUR GAYP DOLLY.
IF YOU'RE ARMOND, YOU'VE GO IT MEANS YOU DON'T TRUST ME. IF YOU DON'T TRUST ME, IT MEANS YOU THINK I'LL LEAVE YOU AND IF YOU THINK I'LL LEAVE YOU IT MEANS YOU DON'T HAVE ANY RESPECT FOR YOURSELF.
IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY RESPECT FOR YOURSELF THEN ALTHOUGH YOU'LL FORCE ME TO LOSE MY RESPECT FOR YOU, IF I LOVE RESPECT FOR YOU I'LL WANT TO LEAVE YOU LEEAK— YOU'RE PLEATHUS AN SWEET, DOLLY
BUT WITH A LOOPHOLE. HOLD - YOU FREE TO GO YOU'RE WHEN I FREE TO GO PROVE - WELL BE NO PROOF, HAVREE TIN TO SEE IT MY WAY, DOLLY.
ME FREE TO GO MY WAY?
AHH — ME.
"BUT DOESN'T SOUND SO BAD.
HOLD ME!
Paul Dooley ©1981 American Place Theatre
©1981 Jules Feiffer

Juxtaposed above are the 1962 *Feiffer* strip which gave *Hold Me!* its name, and a picture of director Cay Michael Patten's theatrical interpretation of that cartoon which featured Paul Dooley and Geraldine Brooks. (Photographed by Martha Holmes)

commercial. Well, I didn't want to write something that would open and close right away.

I held to that idea until I started work on a novel called **Little Murders**, which was based on my sense of what the country was about after the Kennedy assassination. I'd worked on it for two years and was not getting anywhere on it. It was just dreadful. So I went away in a desperate depression to an artists and writers community in upstate New York called Yaddo. Yaddo is an extraordinary 40 acre estate with a couple of Victorian mansions. It gives space for free, to artist, writers or musicians to do their work. You're left alone, there's no telephone, there's no pressure and there's no family and you just sink or swim creatively.

The first day there, I reread the 300 or so handwritten pages of this novel and saw how awful it was and how talentless it was, and went into town, bought a bottle of Scotch and sat up all night drinking. Then I got up the next morning with a hangover, thinking that this is a terrible embarassment because I'm obviously not a novelist and

Continued on page 68

©1981 Jules Feiffer
I PLEDGE A MILLION-
TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA-
AND TO THE CORRUPTION FOR WHICH IT STANDS-
ONE NIXON UNDER GUARD-
INVINCIBLE-
WITH LIBERTY INOPERATIVE-
FOR ALL.
I STONEWALLED THEM ON THE WAR.
I STONEWALLED THEM ON THE COVER-UP.
I STONEWALLED THEM ON THE TAXES.
I STONEWALLED THEM ON THE TAPES.
I STONEWALLED THEM ON THE COURTS.
I HAVE NOT YET BEGUN TO STONEWALL.

Richard Nixon provided so much material for Jules Feiffer that Feiffer considers him to have achieved an "historic height." Excerpted above is Feiffer's view of Richard Nixon's up and down political career

I'm up in this place and my friends had a farewell party for me and I can't go back on Tuesday after coming up on Monday. So I've got to find something else to do. I returned to the original notes I had written three years earlier and was amazed to find that the notes were brilliant. I said, "Jesus, somebody should write this thing. This is terrific." And I hadn't written it. I had written something else. I don't know what I wrote.

So I decided since I had three weeks to kill, hiding out in Yaddo, that I'd try to dramatize the material. And at the end of the first day, I knew I was a playwright and it just took off. From that point on, it didn't really matter whether that play or other plays would succeed or fail, I was addicted to the form. When a scene didn't go well, rather than be disheartened, I'd love it because it gave me a second shot at solving the problem. There was no such thing as failure.

Anyhow, when **Little Murders** opened on Broadway, it closed a week later, after 7 performances.

GASPER: *It didn't have an Off-Broadway opening or . . .*

FEIFFER: Yeah. Two years later Alan Arkin did a production at the Circle in the Square that made the play work. Also the times had changed. So much of what once was so difficult for critics when the play opened in 1967 was coming to be conventional wisdom. By the time we re-opened in 1969, Vietnam was two years older and the fragmentation of American society was two years further on. The problems had become more obvious making the play more obvious. We were a hit.

GASPER: *Did this dramatization of your strips that you mentioned that Second City did, was this eventually to become the play* ***Feiffer's People****?*

FEIFFER: Feiffer's People emerged from the show that was called **The Explainers.** Yeah.

GASPER: *Did you try to impose any sort of dramatic structure to the skits to make it more of a cohesive unit?*

FEIFFER: Not that time, no. But it was my dissatisfaction with the cartoons dramatized on stage in **The Explainers** and later on in other shows; cartoon smorgasbords called **Feiffer's People** that eventually moved me to work on the material. The cartoons, always described as very dramatic when people read them in strip form, seemed singularly undramatic when they were actually on the stage. Audiences and actors liked them well enough and they were done in acting classes all the time, but they never worked as far as I was concerned. What continually bothered me in all of the various productions that I saw (and I saw too many) was that as charmingly as they were done, they looked more cartoony on stage, than in the strip. The acting was broad, punctuated, no reality. The actors and directors were always too aware of the cartoon origins of the material.

RIGGENBERG: *So you feel that it would have probably been more effective, if it had been done more realistically.*

FEIFFER: Yeah. So when the American Place Theater in 1977, asked me to do an evening as part of its humor series—a series of cabarets—I decided to take one more shot, my last shot, at dramatizing the cartoon. Do it under my supervision, something I had never done before, work closely with the director, organize the material so that it would play more like a real play rather than a revue. It didn't have any music or blackouts. All of the actors were on stage all the time so that in one character monologue, the other actors listen and react as the characters they play in their own last monologues. We had all of them acting out of a comic reality, rather than a cartoon reality. They acted the truth of the emotions in the characters, rather than going for gags. I didn't allow any of the actors to see the strips that the script was based on. We had

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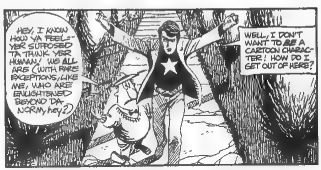
HEY, I KNOW HOW YA FEEL, YER SUPPOSED TA THINK YER HUMAN, WE ALL ARE (WITH RARE EXCEPTIONS, LIKE ME, WHO ARE ENLIGHTENED BEYOND DA KOSMOS, HA!)
WELL, I DON'T WANT TO BE A CARTOON CHARACTER! HOW DO I GET OUT OF HERE?

MARC HEMPEL

In **Cartoon Man**, Hempel gives an introspective view of how the comics artist manipulates his characters, while debating their comparative reality.

P.CRAIG RUSSELL

Steranko calls Craig Russell "a poet" The master fantasist presents **The Chimera**, a brooding allegory drawn in an exquisite finished- pencil technique

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RIDING SHOTGUN

On One Eyed Sailors,

Big Oil Villains,

and Empty, Missing Mists

by Don McGregor

One Eyed Sailors

Damn! But it's great that such a thing as comics exist!

I just love the very idea of them, and every once in a while that scream bursts inside my head, as if I have suddenly rediscovered a startling, forgotten truth, as if for too long I had not seen how splendid a medium comics could truly be. What a wonderful art form, this amalgamation of prose and pictures on a printed page.

There is nothing quite like it.

Comics may not be better than any other popular medium, but it is not inferior in its possibilities and in its rare accomplishments, either.

Granted that the comics (as in most other mediums) are dominated by mediocrity in execution, intent and purpose, but there are those few, beautiful, simply thrilling exceptions.

Elzie C. Segars *Popeye* is one of those exceptions. When I read Segar's suspenseful, daily narrative from the twenties and thirties, that joyous scream is suddenly in my head again, as loud as my laughter at the language and incident on those pages.

Goddamn! But aren't comics just the glitziest thing to come down the pike since old fashioned, drug store ice cream sodas with three scoops of ice cream, whipped cream, and a bright red maraschino cherry on top?

Segar died in the late thirties, and his Popeye has been lost until recent years. The image of Popeye that many folks remember is of the irascible, mumbling sailor from the Max Fleischer cartoons, but even that image has faded for the youngest Popeye viewers. The kids of the seventies know a sanitized, sterilized Popeye, one that barely moves against flat backgrounds through the dreary wasteland of Saturday mornings, where the word cartoon is used criminally. This emasculated Popeye is no relation to the character whose name he bears. In many ways, the Popeye that Max Fleischer and his crew animated did not have much resemblance to Segar's Popeye either. The Popeye physique remained, and the surface traits of his character were there (as well as with some of the minor characters) but the relentless point of view and the inimitable storytelling genius of Elzie Segar was lost. The vision of Segar's strip was abandoned, either purposely overlooked, or more likely, it just could not be successfully translated into a ten minute story line. For it was Elzie Segar's quirky, unique view of the world that made Popeye so special, along with its superb narrative. Segar's characters were unlike most successful comic strip characters, or characters in any type of popular fiction. Segar's (and Popeye's) world was populated by self-involved people, with fickle moods and paradoxical natures. Popeye sails through a world that is preeminently self-serving, yet the Oyl Family (Olive, Castor, Nana and Cole) and Wimpy can perpetuate a selfishly cruel act one day, yet exhibit generosity or compassion on another (as long as the generosity or compassion does not cost them too much in time, effort or money). Olive and Wimpy's greed are magnified reflections of the best and worst traits in human nature, that dichotomy of attitude, sublime and selfish, that exists in all individuals, that encompasses the possibility for fairness or prejudice. With a truly amazing grasp of narrative hook, Segar exposed their foibles and pettinesses. He was critical, but also compassionate, and it is in testament to his gifts as a storyteller that the readers never rejected his characters. In some ways, they could see portions of their own personalities in these flawed, exaggerated comic figures.

During the seventies, some of Segar's "disgustipated" Popeye was salvaged. These old stories were packaged into new collections and printed on quality paper. The first was published by Nostalgia Press, which contained three stories from the thirties: "Popeye and the Jeep", "Popeye's Search For His Poppa" and "Popeye and the Mystery Melody." These stories were superior examples of Segar's style and spirit, although they were shorter tales in length than many that Segar wrote and drew in those days. Some stories lasted for half a year or more. In 1977, Hyperion Press released a reprint collection of *Thimble Theater* (the actual name of the strip Popeye appears in). This collection starts in 1928 and ends in 1930. It includes the introduction of Popeye into the series on January 17, 1929. Jerry Sinkovec and Mike Tiefenbacher provided another source for more Segar *Popeye* strips in the *Menomenee Falls Gazette* and *Guardian*.

But that essential Popeye, the Segar Popeye, the one with "Absolukely no edjacation, but sense like nobody's bizness", the identity that spawned a worldwide fan club during the thirties has not reached the mass audience of the seventies. The majority of the world has forgotten that quintessential Popeye or else have never seen him in his prime.

Someone decided to rectify that situation.

Someone decided to try to revive that Popeye of "nat'ral instinks".

Bob Evans (who produced such Paramount films as the *Godfather* films and *The Odd Couple*) works independently these days. Upon seeing the Broadway show *Annie*, Evans decided to buy the film rights to the play. When that deal proved impossible, Evans listened to Martin Kane, head of Famous Music at Paramount. Kane told Evans that the company still collected royalties of $75,000 annually off the original *I'm Popeye the Sailor Man* song. You know the song. Every average kid, boy and girl, learns its tune by the time they're six years old, and by the time they're seven they've learned other lyrics to that song than the one that Paramount owns the rights to.

Jim Steranko features a lengthy piece on the history of this transaction in his third issue of *PREVUE* Magazine that has as much pertinent data and interviews as you are likely to find anywhere. If you haven't seen it, and want to know more on the background of getting Popeye made into a film, send $3.00 up Supergraphics way, at Box 48, in Reading, Pennsylvania. The zip code is 19603. I mention that publication because the rest of this piece on *Popeye* will concentrate on the finished film, and not on its making, and will compare the product you see on the screen with Elzie Segar's *Popeye*.

Popeye as a film concept (show biz terminology) was underway.

When I first read that Robert Altman was scheduled to direct and Jules Feiffer to script, I was apprehensive. Neither of those two gentlemen, despite their vast credits, seemed to have much in common with Segar's view of the world. Would they be sympathetic to that haphazard, egomaniacal, fantastical world of Segar's creation? Would they be faithful to Segar's world bursting with absurdity, aggression, horror, obsession, exquisite tension and superb superhuman feats? By comparison, Feiffer's comics seem bleak and despairing, a reworking of contemporary confusion and modern malaise. His work is often sharp and biting, more often it is filled with the pain of unfulfillment. Feiffer's work is usually self-contained and does not require the momentum and thrust of telling a long story as does the best of Segar's work. This in no way negates what Feiffer does. He does it well, is sometimes a bit repetitiously, but is is somewhat at odds with the freewheeling Segar style. So I had some doubts about the collaboration; yet on the other hand, I was anticipating *Popeye* (the same way I have been anticipating the making of Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates* as a film), with the sly hope that they would actually do it, that somehow they could do Popeye with human beings and make all the crazy quilt composition of compassion and greed come alive.

For a few moments, in different sections of the film, they actually do achieve Segar's

Popeye's first meeting with Olive Oyl (Jan 24, 1929). Captain Castor Oyl is a mite chagrined at his sister's appearance

Excerpted from the beginning of the famous 1929 Whiffle Hen sequence. Note the development of the relationship between Popeye and Olive in the third strip—true love is never easy in Segar's world

spirit and intent.

And for those few moments, Popeye truly does assume flesh and blood.

The reason that Popeye does not always work is certainly not due to the casting, which is superb. I wonder if Segar would have been able to believe his eyes if he'd been able to see Shelley Duvall as Olive Oyl. Shelley does not have a false moment. In voice, movement and appearance she is Olive Oyl, all high-voiced vanity and discombobulation. Altman claims that she devised a way of moving that reminds one of the different positions of a character in a comic strip, caught for an instant at that particular frame of discoordination. Damn, if it doesn't appear that Shelley has achieved this end. I am not sure how an actress feels about playing a role like Olive, but I am glad she did it because she brought Olive to life.

I have never been partial to television sitcoms, and *Mork and Mindy* was no exception, so I had reservations about Robin Williams as our spinach eating gob. But Williams did not slum his way through the role, he struts and mumbles and squints throughout *Popeye*, and he does several of the difficult stunts that take place in the film. He may not be 100% Popeye as Shelley is Olive, but he comes very close, with his swollen, tattooed forearms and habitual muttering.

Popeye is written out of *Thimble Theatre* on June 27, 1929. Note Olive's "racy" outfit

The public response to *Popeye* was so great that Segar was forced to bring him back. He did so reluctantly two months later on August 5, 1929. Meanwhile Olive had temporarily fallen in love with a heel.

Popeye and Olive's first kiss (August 27, 1929). Sometimes your "immagination" gets the "better" of you.

Segar accidently stumbled upon what was to become one of the most famous phrases of this century: "I yam what I yam" in this strip which originally appeared November 6, 1929.

Can the truth hurt? The Jeeps ability to foretell the future was given to Swee'pea in the *Popeye* movie. In these three daily strips (from May and June of 1936), Segar explores some of the potential negative effects of this kind of wish fulfillment.

I think the problem resides in a conflict of visions.

Robert Evans wanted to do a comic strip musical.

Jules Feiffer wanted to capture Elzie Segar's *Popeye*.

It is difficult to say exactly what Altman wanted to do, perhaps give producer and writer a little of what each wanted, and do his usual compendium of oddball characters talking over each other's lines and looking like refugees from an Elk's convention.

I think they made an honest attempt to capture the wonderfully bizarre nature of Segar's *Popeye*; but that the conflict of visions made them less than totally successful. There were times when they came close to approximating the way Segar would tell a story and gave the audience a tantalyzing taste of that finely tuned tension that Segar was such a master at. Much of the time they failed to follow through and deliver that momentum for sustained periods of time.

In some films you see an element that seems so in conflict with the movie's intent and purpose that you wonder how all the people involved in the production of the movie did not see it and try to correct it. The songs in *Popeye* are such an element. They slow the proceedings down. Beyond that, the refusal to have professional singers do the vocals makes many of them unlistenable. When Olive sings a love song to Popeye (which seems a bit out of character for Olive, but what the hell), it is a romantic ballad that Shelley sings in a screeching, wavering, off-key fashion. Shelley is a fine actress, but a songstress she isn't. And while it it would have been equally absurd to have Olive burst into eloquent voice, singing flawlessly, the method that they chose to have her slaughter the song was not the right one.

Most of the songs are superfluous. In one scene the 370 pound Paul Smith (as Bluto) sings about how mean he is for nearly five minutes.

But we already know Bluto is mean!

We know the depth of his meanness and anger from his first scene, when he shouts to the entire sea village of Sweethaven that it is curfew hour and everyone better have their lights off. . .OR ELSE! So there is no need for Bluto to go on and on about how mean he is (which seems to be the song's endless refrain). Strangely enough this seems to be a song included in the film at the last stages of editing. In the *Popeye Film Book* which prints photos from the film in comic form, the song is omitted. Another song, however, that establishes Wimpy's relationship with Popeye is included in the book version, but did not make it into the finished print. The song is not missed. There are enough musical diversions in the beginning of the film that keep interrupting its pace. However, this song did set up Popeye's revealing to Wimpy that he is "lookin' fer me Poppa. I yam searchin' da sevink seas." In this version, Popeye appears to go into a lengthly diatribe on the subject to someone who is a stranger.

The two songs that do work are *I Yam What I Yam* and the original *I'm Popeye the Sailor Man* which have a vitality and spirit that lifts the tempo of the film and fills it with energy.

Feiffer seems to have used several of the story lines in the Nostalgia Book reprints as the basis for subplots. In the movie, when Swee'pea is left in a basket for Popeye to raise by a mysterious woman, his origin has been changed from the one Segar gave him in the comic strip. The movie Swee'pea becomes a surrogate Jeep, the mysterious animal Segar created who was from the fourth dimension and who could foretell the future. Feiffer obviously thought the prophecy angle a good bit. Since it would be impossible to create a convincing Jeep to perform with humans, why not transfer those powers to Swee'pea? However, only the larceny in Wimpy and Olive's souls are revealed in this incident, as they use Swee'pea to predict racing results. In the strip, the Jeep predicts that Popeye will lose an upcoming battle in a fighting arena. Popeye knows that the Jeep's predictions are infallible and for weeks Segar plays up Popeye's fear of the eventual clash, believing he is doomed to lose before he even steps into the ring. Segar thus creates a finely tuned tension that culminates in a battle that Popeye (and even the audience) believes he cannot win.

In the movie version there is a boxing match with a thug called Oxblood Oxheart, but it has little of the sustained tension of Segar's blood match. Still, it does have some good, energetic moments, and Robin Williams moves superbly as Popeye, legs jouncing around as he carries on a conversation with his opponent and himself. The inclusion of Oxblood's mother adds some tension to the fight. When Popeye realizes his foe's mother is in the audience, he stops swinging at Oxblood's mug. For a moment the kind of absurdity and suspense that Segar often infused into his strip, as well as Popeye's compelling morality, is captured on film. What is odd is that the addition of Oxblood's mother is one not present in the first version of the film.

WITH THE HELP OF THE JEEP I'LL BE ABLE TO PREDICT THE FUTURE! I'LL BE RICH! I'LL BE RICHER THAN ANYBODY!
TOO GOOD
TOO GOOD
YOU HIDE DERE, WHILE I GO TO THE CAMP AND TAKE DE MONEY FROM DE BOOKIES! I'LL BE BACK WIT DE LOOT!
I HAVE ENOUGH RUE YOU HIDE IT, YOU HIDIN TO MAKING THE JEEP DO MY WORK FOR ME! I'LL BE BACK WIT DE LOOT!
POPEYE WILL LOSE I'LL DOUBLE MY BUCKS! AND WE'LL DOUBLE AGAIN!
I WON'T GET NOBODY IN, OR HOUR OR MEETIN... WHOA, JEEP!! DAT LOOK... DAT'S DE LOOK I GET WHEN I'M GOIN TO MAKE MONEY!! I'M GOIN TO MAKE MONEY!! I'M GOIN TO MAKE MONEY!!
FOUR'S TWENTY! IN TO BABY SPINACH, I PAN SUITE, JIMMY JIG WILL BE ON THE BACK SEAT OF THE JEEP! AND HE WOON'T IT MATTER JOS LISTEN, BOYS! IS IT'S LOOKS TO IS PAN LIKELY PAN'S NO GENTLEMAN. I'M GOIN TO MAKE LISTEN A GENTLEMAN LIKE HE WILL BE A BAD EXAMPLE FOR BUSINESS!
DON'T CRY, HE WRONG! I DIDN'T NO HARD LOSER!
IF I JUS DIDN'T WANT TO GO BLACKED BY A DRUNK WHO MAY PUTTING TO TAKE HE TRAKE IT!
BUT NOW I'M SO I'M SO LUCKY! HE GOT TIRE! I'M GOIN TO BE A BIG HOUSE UP! UNDER HE WILL HAVE LOT! I'M AMONG THE SUPERIORS! YOU KNOW?
BUT THE JEEP!! THE JEEP SAID HE'D WIN!
FOR CERTAIN, I KNOW YOU DIDN'T WANT TO GO BLACKED BY A DRUNK! A BRUTAL AND VICIOUS MAN WITH NO REFINEMENT OR APPRECIATION FOR THE FINE ART OF BOXING!
YES, HE PREDICTED OUT IN TO LOSE! I'M SORRY YOU LOSED! I'M SORRY YOU LOSED! I'M SORRY YOU LOSED! I'M SORRY YOU LOSED!
AND, OF COURSE I WOULDN'T LOSE FROM FOR ME TO WIN! I'M NOT THAT IT'S EXCEPTIONAL! I'M THE GREATEST!
OH, HELLO POPEYE! I SAY, HE CAREFULLY WITH THE JEEP! I'M YOU, I'M TODAY! YOU'RE HOT!
OH, MY! GOSH! ANY THE JEEP'S GET I'LL LOSE YOUR CAR! STAY!
POPEYE! POPEYE! I'M SORRY! I THE PREDICTED WRONG! I'M DOCTOR!
HELP! CALL A DOCTOR! SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH POPEYE!
SARGE! I'M THE PHONE! I'M SORRY! I'M PAN'T YEAH, WITH YOU!
I DON'T KNOW! I'LL SOMETHING'S WRONG! I'M SORRY! I'M PAN'T YEAH, WITH YOU!
OH, DOCTOR! IS IT SERIOUS?
I'LL SAY IT'S SERIOUS!!
DON'T JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS! I'M SURE IT'S NOTHING SERIOUS! I'M SURE IT'S NOTHING SERIOUS! I'M SURE IT'S NOTHING SERIOUS!
WE'VE GOT TO GET HIM TO A HOSPITAL QUICK! I'LL CALL AN AMBULANCE!
AN AMBULANCE!
HIS TEMPERATURE IS VERY HIGH! AND HE'S THROWING UP!
IT'S A HOPELESS CONDITION!
POOR POPEYE! I FEEL VERY SORRY FOR HIM! I'M GOING TO DO WELL IN THIS FOR THE PRICE FIGHT! I'M GOING TO GO INTO THE RING!
WHY, POOR LITTLE FELLOW!
©1981 King Features Syndicate

The effects of the Jeep's predictions.

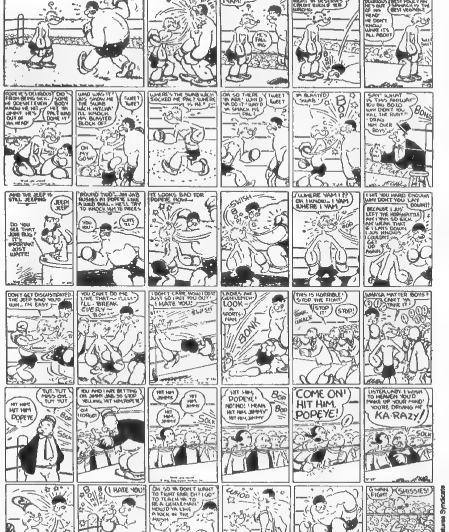
Wesley Ivan Hurt plays Swee'pea and he is one of the most adorable infants in cinema history, even if he doesn't look much like Swee'pea. When a giant octopus starts to entangle the baby with its tentacles toward the film's end, it causes a genuine shudder. Even Wesley seems legitimately afraid, as if he is not sure his grandfather (Robert Altman) can control the creature.

The set of Sweethaven is built on the island of Malta, by Wolf Kroeger. The town reminds me of the tumble-down rickety structure of Fontaine Fox's *Toonerville Folks* comic strip of the thirties more than it does of the places in Segar's Popeye. But this coastal village is a magnificent construction, with its ramshackle houses lurching out over warm, pastel waters. It looks like a travel agent's dream.

There are moments that are fine: The exchange between Popeye and Olive when she gives him his first kiss; Bluto seeing RED and slugging Popeye right out the door, into standing backflips that careen him all the way down to the docks; Popeye enduring

AW, TOOR, THAT OCTOPUS PULL TO TREAT'S... HE'S GOING TO HURT MY BABY! HELP! HELP! SOMEBODY!
I'M GOING UP TO THE SHACK AND TEAR IT TO PIECES! I'M GOING TO GET MY BABY BACK! I'M GOING TO GET MY BABY BACK! I'M GOING TO GET MY BABY BACK!
I SAY, THERE, OLIVE, HE POPEYE'S, IF NOTHING HAS HAPPENED, I WAS GOINGS SUNDAY GO TO THE BEACH WITH MY NEPHEW!
CHOKE, HE POPEYE'S DEAD! I'M SORRY I HAVE TO KILL HIM, BUT I HAVE SUCH A FRIENDLY DISPOSITION!
AH, THERE'S MY BABY! I'M SAVED! MY GOSH! NOT HE IN FACT HORRIBLY!
BLAMED THERE SHOULD BE A LAW AGAINST FURNISHING WEAPONS TO CHILDREN! I'M GOING TO GET MY BABY BACK! I'M GOING TO GET MY BABY BACK! I'M GOING TO GET MY BABY BACK!
WELL, HE'S FOUND HIS FATHER! HE'S LOST TO ME!
I WON'T HINDER POPEYE AND HAVE HIM LOSE HIS BABY! I'M GOING TO BE A FATHER-IN-LAW!
WE'RE JUST'S HE, POPEYE'S ALL RIGHT! HE GOT BABY, BUT I WAS DISINTERESTED!
GEE WHIZ! EVERYTHING CAME TO THIS WORLD!
HELLO POPPA
I SEE - HELLO, POPPA!
I SEE - HELLO, POPPA!
©1981 King Features Syndicate

After a fight with an "octopussy", Popeye finally meets his father Poopdeck Pappy in these three strips excerpted from October 1936. Note the refinement of Segar's drawing style from the early strips



The fight with Jimmy Jab. A true Segar brawl, not too unlike the fight in the *Popeye* movie. Note how Segar is able to manipulate his point of focus on characters and conflicts which are not a part of the main story. To find out the significance of the June Bug, you'll have to read the Nostalgia Press reprint book.

Being an orphan can lead to a bit of an "identity" crisis. In these two strips (which actually appeared a month apart in 1936), Popeye tries to fill in some of the gaps in his past.

taunts until he can "stan's no more" and using one of the barhouse roughians as a punching bag; Olive stuffed into a crimson pipe shouting for Popeye to save her; Popeye facing the monstrous octopus.

It is difficult to know how much of Segar's style Feiffer actually captured, since portions of his script have been changed. It appears that Feiffer's purpose was an honest one and that he worked hard to achieve a cinematic representation of Segar's *Popeye*. He has achieved a feeling for the *Thimble Theatre* characters and he manages to touch on some of the qualities that Segar made integral to that cast. Unfortunately, the filmmakers should have screened a few of the great silent comedian's films. From Keaton to Lloyd to Chaplin, Segar's narrative is based on the tenets of that storytelling style. Like those silent greats, Segar built much of his humor on a singular incident, playing off an essential idea and building on it; gradually becoming wilder and wilder, as the film progresses.

As one example, let's take Buster Keaton's silent film *Sheriock, Jr.* At one point in this film, Keaton, as the indomitable sleuth, is challenged to a game of pool by two villains. They are in an elegant, luxurious den. Unbeknownst to Keaton, the two men have rigged one of the cue balls (number 13) to explode upon contact with one of the other balls. They have also poisoned his glass of wine. As another precaution, they have set a third death trap with a nearby suit of armor. When the person sits in the upholstered chair near the armor, its axe comes crashing down. The audience is made aware of all this. Keaton leans over the table, cue stick in hand. He shoots. The cue ball veers to the right of the deadly number 13. Keaton tries again. The cue ball now veers to the left. Keaton sets the ball in place and prepares to shoot again. One of the villains is so nervous he nearly drinks the poisoned wine. Realizing that he has almost killed himself, he collapses in the death chair. He leaps up in sheer fright, suddenly aware of his mistake, as the axe crashes down where he'd been seconds before. Keaton shoots the third time. This must be it! What can possibly save him? The ball skips right over the deadly number 13! Now, Keaton tries again, and every ball is hit. All of the separate balls fall into the pockets, all, except for number 13! It is one capper after another.

Much of Segar's humor was based on this escalating principle. In the story that introduces Popeye into *Thimble Theatre*, Segar spends nearly six weeks with Castor Oyl trying, in vain, to kill the magic whiffle hen. Castor attempts to kill it with axe. With gun. With poison. With a cannon. By hurling it off the edge of a cliff. By drowning it. By burying it alive. By strangling it. By feeding it to sharks. By dynamiting it. By electrocuting it. A vast array of lethal means that would exhaust even Agatha Christie. The capper. Take an idea and play it to the hilt.

© 1981 King Features Syndicate

And once Segar has resolved one story line, another immediately is introduced to hook the reader. When Castor finally gives up trying to kill the whiffle hen we find that it is worth lots of money for some mysterious reason and that, in a humorous reversal, there are many people willing to kill Castor to get their hands on the funny looking bird.

At the same time, Segar had a superb display of verbal humor, as well. The film captures some of this, but I think they should have allowed more of the Williams' dual dialogue with himself to enrich the film. Before the Marx Brothers were firing off their rapidly delivered wit in films, Segar wrote that brand of nutsy, irreverent humor. Dozens of lines would spout from Popeye's mouth in a single day when the story line did not move with frenzied, physical schticks.

★ ★ ★

I must admit. I am going to go back and see *Popeye* again. This time I'll take my daughter, Lauren, along. It may not always succeed at what it sets out to do, it may not completely capture Segar, but for those moments when it does, it's more than worth the time. And who knows? If the film does well enough, maybe they can do it again, and this time, get it completely right.

Until then, if you want to discover that quintessential Popeye, you might order the *Popeye* book from Hyperion Press, 45 Riverside Avenue, Westport, Connecticut 06880 for $8.95, plus a dollar for shipping costs. If you want to see still more of Popeye you might contact Bill Blackbeard at the San Francisco Academy of Comic Art. Their phone number is (415) 681-1737. Their address is SFACA, 2850 Ulloa St., San Francisco, California 94116. For something like $30.00, they will send you a complete years worth of Popeye strips, or many other classics. They all have top notch reproduction. Cut back on a few of the bland, monthly comics that proliferate on the stands and give yourself a true comic treat.

Tell them Don sent you.

What the hell? If it was good enough for Groucho, it's surely good enough for me.

Swee'pea's origin in the *Thimble Theatre* strip. *Popeye* screenwriter Jules Feiffer combined the Jeep and Swee'pea character and condensed Swee'pea's origin in the movie. (Excerpted from July and August 1933).

Big Oil Villians

Imagine Jack Webb making a movie that attacks the establishment. Imagine Jack Webb indicting corruption in the police department, accusing government officials of collusion with big business, and all in the staccatto, terse style of "We just want the facts, Ma'am." A vitriol *Dragnet*.

If you can imagine all that then you can save yourself five bucks and see *The Formula* inside your head.

George C. Scott plays stalwart cop Barney Caine in the same laconic Joe Friday manner, although his stomach protrudes over his belt in a way that Webb's never did. He is investigating the murder of another cop, an old friend. The friend, Barney learns, was tracking down a formula that enables the possessor to make fuel from synthetic materials. Not only that, but he learns that a big oil corporation (or what Barney vehemently terms The Overworld) has suppressed this knowledge since World War II. Barney stumbles on, but with integrity. He tracks the formula and the killer of his friend to West Germany and then to St. Moritz, Switzerland.

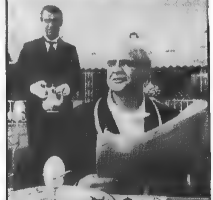
Barney questions a lot of people, in the *Dragnet* manner. He asks a question and they tell their brief story, except none of them have the cute idiosyncracies that suspects often had on *Dragnet*. Except for Marlon Brando. One thing about Marlon, he never appears to be fading into the wood work.

These interruptions lead Barney from scientist to scientist, who are all very grey and drab (and unbelievable despite that). When Barney travels on, they are never seen again. Some of them are killed. The real culprit is Marlon Brando's character, the oil magnate supreme, Adam Steiffel. Barney sees Adam twice. That's one of the ways that we know the Adam is the bad guy.

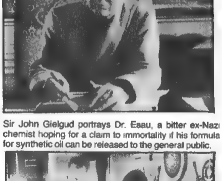
The movie is moderately interesting when Marlon is on the screen. He plays the part broadly, and with enough quirks and gestures to show he is not taking any of this too seriously. Marlon looks fine, with his huge bulk, and tufts of hair fringing his bald head, and using his little glasses as a prop. He moves his body around like Sidney Greenstreet in *The Maltese Falcon*. At least, Marlon looks alive. Most of the other performers appear to have had transfusions of embalming fluid. Perhaps they are trying out for parts in George Romero's third zombie film.

It is odd. It would seem to me that the idea of *The Formula* would have the potential to be a scathing, exciting thriller, and yet it is dreary, tedious material. The violence is trimmed from the novel version, and the sexuality (which is a little bit odd in itself when author Shagan refers to women's sexual organs as the "confluence of all that was evil and all that was exciting") is completely omitted. Many of the dialogue scenes involve people walking, but they never seem to be going anywhere. The camera follows them for long stretches, as they answer Barney's succinct questions and then Barney wanders away. But no one reaches a destination. As well, all of the scenes seem to be murkily lit, whether they are in sunny California or in the mountains of Switzerland. I could not help wonder why they bothered to go to all these different locations if they were not going to use the places to good effect. They could have stayed on a back lot. *Casablanca* did, and was a lot more atmospheric.

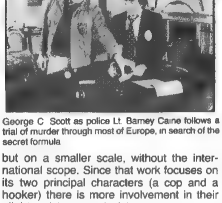
Steve Shagan, who produced and wrote *The Formula*, was much better with *Save The Tiger* and *City of Angels* (filmed as *Hustle*). In fact, *Hustle* seems to have the same structure and theme as *The Formula*,



With his characterization of big oil tycoon Adam Steiffel, Marlon Brando gracefully makes the trasition from leading man to character actor. Using wizened balding hair wire frame glasses, creaky voice and squat walk, Brando creates a real character despite writer Steve Shagan's limp script.



Sir John Gielgud portrays Dr. Esau, a bitter ex-Nazi chemist hoping for a claim to immortality if his formula for synthetic oil can be released to the general public.



George C Scott as police Lt. Barney Caine follows a trial of murder through most of Europe, in search of the secret formula.

but on a smaller scale, without the international scope. Since that work focuses on its two principal characters (a cop and a hooker) there is more involvement in their plight and their moral crisis.

The only difference between *The Formula* and *Hustle* (besides the fact that a formula for synthetic fuel supposedly exists) is that the culprit ends up dead in *Hustle* and in *The Formula* he is left alive to continue to wheel and deal.

I liked Mr. Shagan's material better when he produced *Tarzan* for television. A lot of people did not like the TV *Tarzan*. It wasn't Burroughs, that's for sure, and it did play to the kids quite often. But I liked Ron Ely. I liked the effort he put into his stunt sequences, and the fact that he was willing to take some risks to execute some dangerous fights with men and animals. I liked the combination of little morality plays with the exotic locales and fierce confrontations. I liked seeing Helen Hayes or Diana Ross or Julie Harris giving a touch of class to a *Tarzan* production. Mr. Shagan was the producer of the series. Mr. Shagan has gone on to *The Formula*, and I guess the only work Ron Ely can find these days is as the host of *Name That Tune* or *The Miss America Contest*. I guess it's a lot less dangerous. I guess it pays the rent. I guess we can never tell where any of us will wind up. Sigh.

John Avildsen directed *Save The Tiger* and *W. W. and the Dixie Dancekings* from other Shagan scripts. He also helmed Stallone's first *Rocky*. With their previous experience together it would have seemed that Mr. Avildsen and Mr. Shagan liked working together. But wires crossed somewhere. Avildsen wanted his name taken off the credits, claiming that Shagan reedited the film after he was finished with it. Supposedly, MGM entered the editing game too. After seeing what the two creative people had done with the film, they opted to edit the film a third time, using some of both director and writer's versions.

It seems like a case where no one won. Especially the audience.

Empty, Missing Mists

She does not just walk through the night mist.

She becomes The Mist.

As ethereal, as pervasive, with the same damp touch when her fingers reach out and touch a wrist or a throat.

She is also an ordinary woman. Victoria Westgate. And she has not been the Mist all her life. When finally this affliction, this power is released within her, it alters her life drastically.

The Mist is a new series I have been working on for Warren Magazines. I have written the first four installments and Victoria has not yet become The Mist. This is somewhat unusual for a comic series. The hero or heroine must always appear in the first book. I wanted the chance in this instance to introduce the routine and lifestyle of Victoria and her family. I wanted the chance to show her difficulties and joys in making a marriage work, in motherhood, in work and in her sexuality. I wanted the reader to slowly come to know how her life was before it was so drastically changed.

The Mist is a New York City strip. The story takes place around Manhattan and Brooklyn, where Victoria lives. When I finished the first story, "A Public and Private Surveillance," I wasn't completely satisfied. I wanted to show how different and diverse directions affect all our lives. A violent incident, seemingly unrelated to Vicky and her life, will eventually intrude upon her life, upsetting the harmony and routine of that life.

I am not interested in the sick aspects of many horror stories, or in promoting grotesque perversions as attractive or (as it is portrayed in many instances) sexually stimulating. I am interested in creating atmosphere, perhaps one of concern and dread, but always for my lead character, man or woman. I am also interested in creating a sense of tension, one that escalates as the story proceeds, and hopefully is resolved in a legitimate shock sequence. And while some of the sickness of heart and mind to those prone to degradation and violence toward human beings might be present, it is expressed as something dark and sadly destructive. I was not sure that I had accomplished all that in my first tale of this new series, *The Mist*, but I had hoped that when the first five or six stories (which detail her origin) were finished, that the cumulative effect would satisfy those requirements. I hoped the end result would create recognizable human beings, who attempt to cope with the dissatisfactions they feel about themselves. Vicky and her husband Phil are a man and woman trying to live reasonably decent lives. I did not want the series' regular characters to represent an entire group of people or way of life.

More important than the horror elements, I felt that *The Mist* series presented me with the chance to examine the family unit, using family members as the lead characters, rather than rootless loners with no responsibilities, or heroes or heroines who primarily display transitory affections for strangers they meet in their travels. This is not a situation normally handled in comics and it seemed worth the effort to try to handle it as realistically as possible. I wanted to show how Vicky and her husband, Phil, handle inflation, unemployment, their sexuality, children and house chores. In short the daily necessities and trivia that fills their lives. I thought it would be equally interesting to examine how the eventual transformation into The Mist would affect Vicky's life with her husband and son. With all those possibilities to work with, I felt that I had a series worth doing. The difficulty seemed to lie in how to pull these elements into a natural sequence, and to keep the contrivances at a minimum. The major difficulty in doing this effectively, in giving the readers time to leisurely follow and come to know Vicky and Phil, and the other regular characters, is in the limiting of the number of pages allowed to tell the stories. The stories in Warren magazines are normally shorter in length and usually run from eight to ten pages. It is not easy to build this tension, plus the fabric of their daily lives in such short space—especially when you are trying to keep the convenient, comic-booky coincidences as few as possible.

Normally, I would not dissect my reasons

THE MIST: "A Public and Private Surveillance" McGregor - 14

PAGE FOUR CONTINUED

PANEL FIVE

(Shot of the blood splashing onto the official papers, as MR ═══ Lucifer's hand ripping off a button from Abernathy's suitcoat. The reasoning for all of this will become clear later.)

LUCIFER 9: All right. I'll leave for now, since you disapprove of me.

LUCIFER 10: But it isn't over between us. Not yet. This time the customer will settle accounts.

PANEL SIX

(Wide panel. We are on Sixth Avenue in the Village. In the FOREGROUND are two men in average clothing. They are standing at the window of a Pizza shop. Past them, WE can see Victoria striding towards them. The telephone company building is behind her and WE see Lucifer running out the door, looking for which direction Victoria has gone.) (Noah is black; Hobie is white.)

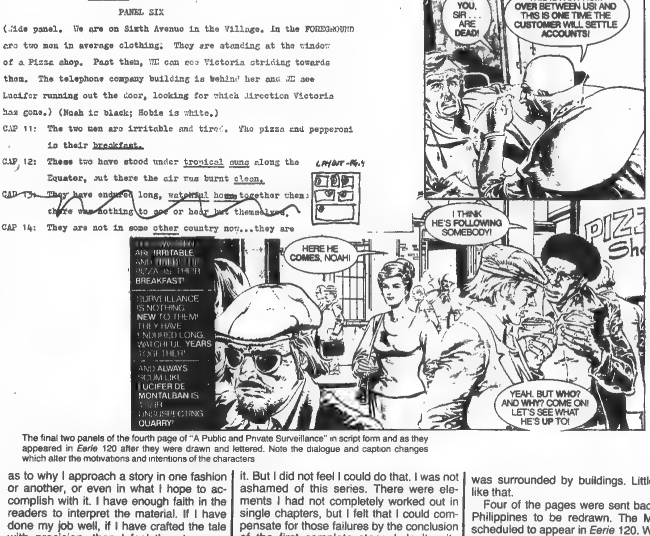
CAP 11: The two men are irritable and tired. The pizza and pepperoni is their breakfast.

CAP 12: These two have stood under tropical suns along the Equator, but there the air was burnt clean.

CAP 13: They have endured long, watery hours together then: there was nothing to see or hear but themselves.

CAP 14: They are not in some other country now...they are supposedly home...but they have come to feel like awkward and unwelcome strangers.

NOAH (dripping Hobie's arm, and almost knocking his drippping, gooey piece of pizza out of his hands.) Hey, Hobie! There he goes now! Lawrence of Lexington without his camels.


AND YOU, SIR... ARE DEAD!
THIS IS FAR FROM OVER BETWEEN US! AND THIS IS ONE TIME THE CUSTOMER WILL SETTLE ACCOUNTS!
I THINK HE'S FOLLOWING SOMEBODY!
HERE HE COMES, NOAH!
THE TWO MEN ARE IRRITABLE AND TIRED. THE PIZZA IS THEIR BREAKFAST.
SURVEILLANCE IS NOTHING NEW TO THEM. THEY HAVE ENDURED LONG, WATCHFUL YEARS TOGETHER.
AND ALWAYS SOMETHING UNDER DE MONTALBAN IS BEING WATCHED.
AND SOMETHING QUARRY.
YEAH, BUT WHO? AND WHY? COME ON!! LET'S SEE WHAT HE'S UP TO!

The final two panels of the fourth page of "A Public and Private Surveillance" in script form and as they appeared in *Eerie* 120 after they were drawn and lettered. Note the dialogue and caption changes which alter the motivations and intentions of the characters

as to why I approach a story in one fashion or another, or even in what I hope to accomplish with it. I have enough faith in the readers to interpret the material. If I have done my job well, if I have crafted the tale with precision, then I feel the story can stand on its own.

However, I am about to do something unorthodox in this medium. I feel I have to apologize for the first story in *The Mist* series.

No one has told me that I must make this apology. It is something within me that compels me to do this. The truth is, I cannot rest easy until I do.

The first *Mist* story, "A Public and Private Surveillance," has appeared in *Eerie* 120. Normally when a writer has a new series premiering, he or she ring the clarion horns, and shout it up with fervor. Or else, if it is a strip he or she is not proud of, they keep very mum and hope that no one will notice it. But I did not feel I could do that. I was not ashamed of this series. There were elements I had not completely worked out in single chapters, but I felt that I could compensate for those failures by the conclusion of the first complete story. I don't write enough stories to casually dismiss them. Since *The Mist* is the beginning of a series, and if the reader is to judge its potential from the first installment, they might wonder, why they should bother to follow it further after a disappointing opening.

What happened was this: The first Mist story was written back in July. Though it was a New York City based story, the script was sent to be illustrated in the Philippines. This created a few problems when the artwork came back. The artist, never having seen New York, misinterpreted much of the geography of the places where the events take place. The World Trade Center became very short. The Statue of Liberty was surrounded by buildings. Little things like that.

Four of the pages were sent back to the Philippines to be redrawn. The Mist was scheduled to appear in *Eerie* 120. When the deadline arrived on the magazine, the four pages had not been redone, or, at least the redrawn pages had not reached the Warren offices. With the deadline now so imminent, the only course left was to publish the story without the four pages.

Four pages of a sixteen page story would be lost. Or, a quarter of the story's length.

Editor Bill Dubay allowed me to come into the offices just before Christmas Day to see how the story looked. At the time I had no idea that the story would be run minus four pages. When I learned the news, I was heartsick. I thank Bill for allowing me the opportunity to go over the material, and to try to salvage a bit of the material by placing it on the pages that were going to see print.

THE MIST: "A Public and Private Surveillance" McGregor - 16

PAGE FIVE

PANEL ONE

(Close shot on the two agents. Hobie curls around, looking for their prey. He has a soggy piece of pizza hanging half out of his mouth. Cheese, tomato sauce and pepperoni dribble down his chin. Play for a bit of humor.)

HOBIE 1: Mmphf...where the hell is that freak headed now?

NOAH 2: Maybe if we let him know we're trailing him, maybe he'd be more considerate...

HOBIE 3: Ahh, screw it, Noah! I've about had it!

NOAH 4: Had what?

PANEL TWO

(Noah and Hobie charge into the crowded sidewalks, taking up pursuit, trying not to lose sight of Lucifer. Pizza and cheese drip off Hobie's hands. There is something painful in Hobie's eyes, like memories of too many deaths, too many questionable acts.)

HOBIE 5: Too many walks down that corridor there in Washington.

NOAH 6: I've walked it right beside you, Hobie.

HOBIE 7: Yeah, but there the hell was I heading, you know? I mean, once I thought I knew what was at the end of the corridor.

PANEL THREE

(WIDE ANGLE, DOWN SHOT ON THE SIDEWALK. DISTANCE. We can see Victoria walking up Sixth Avenue and starting to turn left onto West 4th. Several people behind her (We can see Lucifer, cloak swirling, keeping an eye on her. On the right hand side, even further behind, We can see Hobie and Noah.)

HOBIE 8: Then we ended up in Santo Domingo or Oaxaca or Berrevoer, and finally back in the Vatican...but all those briefings, they left out the important words.

PAGE FIVE CONTINUED

PANEL THREE CONTINUED

NOAH 9: They do, huh?

PANEL FOUR:

(We see Victoria in the lead, walking down the steps into the cellar store called The Pink Pussycat. It is an erotica shop on West 4th that sells all kinds of sexually orientated products. Victoria looks a little bit hesitant about entering such a place, as if she is afraid that someone who knows her will see her doing it. We can see just a suggestion of Lucifer, ducking into a sidewalk cafe doorway. We hear Hobie and Noah, but they are out of sight. The pointers disappear into the crowds.)

HOBIE 10: Yeah, and don't tell me you haven't had the same doubts, Noah...about that we were becoming.

NOAH 11: Guess I should've reviewed the world situation since 1943, huh?

PANEL FIVE:

(Hobie and Noah are at the corner of 6th Avenue and West 4th, looking at Lucifer hiding in his doorway.) (Hobie is wiping tomatoe sauce off his clothes.)

NOAH 12: Dangerous thoughts, Hobie.

HOBIE 13: Not dangerous enough, huh? Couldn't work in a Pinter play?

PANEL SIX

(We see Lucifer's reflection in the Pink Pussycat window, and shooting down through it we can see inside. Victoria has approached one of the counters. I'm not sure how much the magazine will allow us to show of the products, but we should be able to show the massage bills, sexy clothing, that type of thing. I would assume the more

THE MIST: "A Public and Private Surveillance" McGregor - 17

PAGE FIVE CONTINUED (3)

PANEL SIX CONTINUED

exotic materials (vibrators, dildos, inflatable dolls, S&M materials, etc.) are forbidden. What say you, Bill? Anyhow, Noah and Hobie's voices come from off-camera.)

HOBIE 14: We're refugees from our own lives, you know that?

NOAH 15: Well, I wouldn't go that far. We're the good guys, remember?

PANEL SEVEN

(Hobie throwing his piece of pizza in a nearby garbage can, as they look at Lucifer walking to a sidewalk phone booth.)

HOBIE 16: Oh, that's right. Preserving America's ideals.

NOAH 17: In formaldehyde, if nothing else.

On this page (which was not part of the final story) Hobie and Noah's relationship is introduced as well as their recent doubts about their profession. Underlining words is a device comic scripters use to indicate what words should be emphasized by being lettered with a thicker, darker pen point.

He did not have to let me do it. An editor has total prerogative on anything that is published in illustrated magazines and it probably did not make his job any easier to have me in there, lamenting about what had happened to the strip and suggesting a few ways to make the drastic omissions less detrimental to the work. Sometimes it's called humoring the bereaved writer. I'm not sure any of the changes were made, although one of the cancelled pages were reinstated in the story.

But even if all the rewrites had been used (and at this point I have no idea how many of those will actually be incorporated into the hatcheted version that will now see print) it is still an uneven piece, at best. One of the characters, Myrna, is influenced by what she reads in the papers and sees on television. She sees herself as she really is, a clerk in a Woolworth department store and she knows she will never be a Max Factor lady. Though she is skittish and shy, Myrna feels ashamed that she can't achieve the feminism that she has read so much about. In this version, all that is lost. She is a stock character, who obediently follows the whim of a leader of a Voodoo cult. But why? Her motivations aren't even hinted at in the version that sees print. As well, there are two secret agents named Hobie and Noah, who are conducting a private surveillance, and begin to question their actions. And thus question their way of life. Much of this indecision is lost. Now their introduction speaks of good guys and scum. It's just not that simple a contrast, nor even a way I would express such a concept if that was an idea I wanted to convey. Even much of Vicky's homelife has been reduced.

I asked Bill if I could reprint some of my script pages for that story with this article and he gave me his permission. I thank him again. Chris Adames called me today and told me that Val Mayerik will be illustrating and inking the strip, beginning with the third segment. I am heartily cheered by that news. I have a lot of hope for its future now, and I'm glad to have the opportunity to work with Val. I can hardly wait to see his first pages.

But I still apologize for that first story. I wish it were better. I feel that you deserve better. I hope you will stick around and see if the series does become stronger, and if I achieve some of the goals I set out to achieve. Maybe, we can eventually get longer stories.

I can only hope that the second story at least appears intact. It was of such a delicate nature, concerning as it did the menstral cycle, that a part of me knows it will only work if the total balance is there.

Only time will tell.

That and the unpredictable whimsy of the comic medium. ■

PAGE SEVEN

PANEL ONE

(A LENGTH LONG SHOT. The World Trade Center buildings rise up into the sky behind Lucifer and Myrna. It is five o'clock and the skyscrapers are emptying with hundreds of people. A mass exodus. One of the people is Victoria. She walks right by them, without seeing them. Under her arm she has a package that she took from the Pink Pussycat. More on this, says he tantalysingly, later.)

CAP 1: At five o'clock, Wall Street is alive, as with thousands of locusts deserting the skyscrapers and cocking the subways.

CAP 2: The World Trade Center stands like a monument over the flight, but somehow its massive size hints of impermanence...that there will be a time when there is no longer a place called... Manhattan...

LUCIFER 3: That's her!

MYRNA 4: Geez! She really does look like Auguste! No kidding, this'll really impress the group.

LUCIFER 5: Her name is Westgate. Don't lose her! When she gets home, wherever that is, get her apartment number off the intercom listing.

LUCIFER 6: Don't fail me, Myrna! My finding her was a sign from the Gods...they have chosen us to bring Auguste back to the religion...and I have chosen you to help...deliver her!

PAGE SEVEN CONTINUED

PANEL TWO

(Noah and Hobie start to split up from their vantage point, Noah following Myrna, Hobie following Lucifer.)

NOAH 7: You stick with Dr. Weird...I'll tag along with the playmate.

HOBIE 8: I refuse to believe she was ever a Playmate of the Month.

PANEL THREE

(Outside shot, picturesque, of the "D" train going over the Manhattan bridge at sunset. The skyscraper windows reflect the sun dazzlingly. A tiny Statue of Liberty is caught in the sun. The Staten Island ferries pass below.)

CAP 9: The "D" train scales the Manhatten Bridge. In the distance, the Statue of Liberty bakes under the dying sun.

CAP 10: Golden light glistens off the West River and like a magician's wand transforms it from muck and silt and gasoline and garbage into a wondrous waterway to the ocean.

PANEL FOUR

(Shot of a six floor apartment building complex. There are lawns and trees on either side of a marble-plaque entrance way to double doors that read Blue-Crest Apartments. We see Victoria, with her package, pushing through the glass door into the interior. There are stone, sculptured benches on either side of the marble plaqueway. We won't use them in this story, but we will make use of them later. This setting will, as will the apartment, be a regular sight in the series. Somewhere behind Victoria we see Myrna coming to a stop.)

CAP 11: When Victoria Westgate reaches home, the sun has gone down behind the buildings, but the humidity remains.

PAGE SEVEN CONTINUED (3)

PANEL FOUR CONTINUED

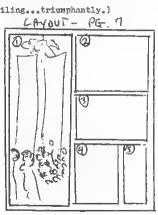
CAP 12: Her pantyhose has dug a trench across her stomach that collects sweat.

PANEL FIVE

(SILENT PANEL. Finally. Relief. In it, we see Myrna standing in the doorway, looking at the names on the listing near the buzzers. Her finger points to the name WESTGATE, APT 2H.

Myrna is smiling...triumphantly.)

LAYOUT - PG. 7



MARVEL COMICS

SMITH, ADAMS IN EPIC

New work from Barry Windsor Smith and Neal Adams, two emigrants from mainstream comics, is featured in the 7th issue of *Epic Illustrated*. A new Barry Windsor Smith painting will be the cover for that issue and Neal Adams has written and drawn a 16 page color story entitled, "Holocaust." Also in *Epic 7* are two parts/chapters of Jim Starlin's *Metamorphosis odyssey* series, "Epus" by Pepe Moreno, two illustrated Franz Kafka fables ("Before the Law" and "Messenger") by Leo Duranona and "UFO" -- a black and white story by Tim Conrad. Although no final decision has yet been reached, a *Wierd World* story (possibly drawn by John Buscema) may also be included in this issue.

Epic 6 will not feature "Riders to Galaxy's End" as reported last month, due to scheduling problems. Two inventory features have been inserted instead: "Bugg Lives" -- a prose story by Ron Goulart, illustrated by Phoebe Berry and "No Laughing Matter" by Roger McKenzie and Mark Bright.

MOVIE COMICS: ROCKY III, MONTY PYTHON

Marvel Comics will do a comic book adaptation of all three *Rocky* movies. The adaptation will be timed with the December release of *Rocky III*.

Marvel will also handle the U.S. distribution of a comic book adaptation of the upcoming Monty Python film, *Time Bandits* which is being produced by Marvel Limited, Marvel's London office. This is the first movie that Marvel Limited (which is a completely separate editorial entity from the parent company) has been assigned to adapt. Paul Neary will probably edit the *Time Bandits* one shot. No creative teams are set for either project.

MOVIE SPECIALS: UPDATE

The three Marvel movie adaptation planned for June release (*For Your Eyes Only*, *Dragon Slayer* and *Raiders of the Lost Arc*) will be marketed in multiple formats. The *Dragon Slayer* and *For Your Eyes Only* packages will contain a 48 page comic book adaptation of the movie and 16 pages of articles and features. Both of these projects will be released as mass market paperbacks which will cost $2.50 as well as issues of a regular 50¢ color comic book. It is still not certain if *James Bond* will continue as a series after the conclusion of the adaptation.

Meanwhile, the *Raiders of the Lost Arc* comic adaptation will be 64 pages and will not include any text material. At this writing, it will only be released as a three issue color comic mini-series. Marvel still hopes to release each of the three adaptations as a Treasury book which will also retail for $2.50. However there are no definite plans for a release in this format as of yet.

Due to the pressure of the June deadline, all three books will feature hand separated color. Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter commented that the adaptation will, "look like the *Close Encounters* book we did a few years ago."

SHOOTER'S AVENGERS: MINUS VISION, BEAST, SCARLET WITCH

The Vision, the Beast and the Scarlet Witch will soon be leaving the Avengers. The characters who are percieved by new *Avengers* writer Jim Shooter as "largely deadwood" will be cut away after issue 211. Shooter also announced that Yellowjacket will probably also leave the series.

The new roster will conform to Shooter's concept of the series as being, "A giant teamup

of your favorite heroes rather than a group of heroes created specifically for the Avengers." As part of that concept, Captain America, Thor and Iron Man will now play dominant roles in the series instead of the more reserved roles that they've had in the series since the early 70's. Shooter also mentioned that the Silver Surfer may become an Avenger because in his words, "I'm one of the few writers that Stan Lee trusts to write the Silver Surfer."

Bill Mantlo was originally slated to write the *Avengers* and the idea to change the roster was his originally. However it is not clear at this writing if Mantlo's planned roster change rpsembled Shooter's final team. No reason was given at the Febuary Marvel Press Conference for the change in writers. Gene Colan and Dan Green will handle the art chores for the series.

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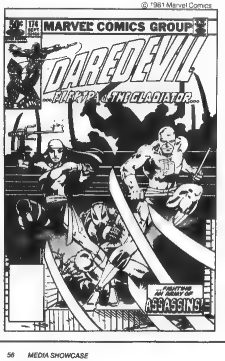

SUMMER ANNUAL NEWS

Temporary editor David Anthony Kraft is editing 4 of next summer's Marvel annuals to ease the workload of the editors of the regular books. The annuals under the wing of Kraft and assistant editor Helen Katz are the *Captain America Annual* by David Michelinie, Gene Colan and Dave Simons, the *Fantastic Four Annual* by Ed Hannigan and Steve Ditko, the *Marvel Two-In-One Annual* (featuring Klaw, Ka-Zar, Wyatt Wingfoot and a new character originally mentioned in *FOOM* magazine--American Eagle) by Doug Moench, Ron Wilson and an as yet unknown inker and *The Avengers Annual* (featuring "the final fate of Ms. Marvel") by Chris Claremont and Mike Golden.

The Fantastic Four will guest star in next summer's *X-Men Annual* in a Chris Claremont story, entitled "Ooo-La-La Badoon." Brent Anderson and Bob McCleod will illustrate this tale that also features Arkon.

THOR OPTIONED FOR MOVIE

The option for the motion picture rights of the Marvel character, Thor, has been recently purchased. Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter was unable to name the producer interested in Thor as a movie property.

Thor is not the only Marvel property currently optioned for live-action motion pictures. Dino De Laurentiis holds options on Man-Wolf and Ghost Rider while Universal Pictures owns the option for the Silver Surfer. Howard the Duck, allegedly a Marvel character, has been optioned by Selluloid Productions for a live-action movie. The legal ownership of that character is being contested by Howard the Duck author, Steve Gerber.

The purchase of an option on a "property" is only the first step in basing a movie on a character or a book. Movie producers routinely control the options of a large number of properties, so that they can work on a lot of projects at once. Only a few of these projects actually become motion pictures. The majority of the options simply run out before the project can either acquire adequate financial backing or the proper creative personnel can successfully translate the property into practical motion picture form.

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
Fantastic Four
WHO IS HE? WHAT IS HE?
THE MAN WITH THE POWERS
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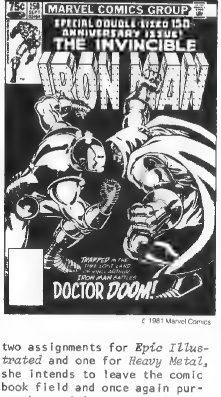
LYNN GRAEME FIRED

Lynn Graeme, editor of the now defunct Marvel Magazine line was fired last month. Officially no reason was given for her ouster or her "replacement" by freelancer Tom DeFalco. Ralph Macchio, Graeme's assistant and assisiant editor of the magazine line since 1979, has been reassigned to work under Denny O'Neil.

When asked to comment on the recent turn of events, Ms. Graeme explained, "From the first day I was hired, I was aware of how things are done at Marvel Comics. When I found out how Rick Marschall (Graeme's predecessor) had been treated, I knew that when I left--it would be sudden."

Graeme did not feel that the move was a reflection on her work, "I don't feel superior to the people who were hired and fired before me. I did a good job, but then again the people who were hired and fired before me had done a good job as well."

After Ms. Graeme completes



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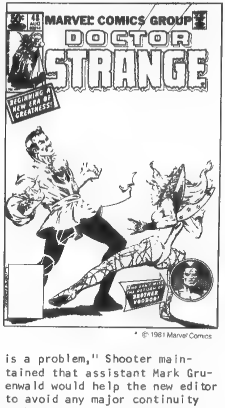

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two assignments for *Epic Illustrated* and one for *Heavy Metal*, she intends to leave the comic book field and once again pursue her writing career. She is the co-author of the musical play *Hooray for Me* (which was co-funded by the New York State Council of the Arts and the National Endowment of the Arts) and has written *The Honeymoon Handbook*--a travel guide to getting the most out of your honeymoon without "getting ripped off" (published last year).

Graeme has few regrets about her stay at Marvel, "The only thing that hurts about their firing me is the way they chose to do it."

EDITORIAL SHAKEUP: DEFALCO HIRED

A major reorganization of the Marvel editorial stables has been precipated by the hiring of Tom DeFalco as a full-fledged editor. As reported last month, Marvel has been suffering from monumental deadline problems since the increase from 17 to 22 page stories. The hiring of another editor will certainly ease the deadline pressure somewhat, especially after last month's firing of Lynn Graeme.

Defalco and assistant editor Mark Gruenwald (who was transferred from his former post with Denny O'Neil) will now be editing all three Spider-Man books, *Ghost Rider* (after David Anthony Kraft's two issue stint), *Micronaughts* (formerly edited by Al Milgrom) and *What If*. The pair will also be handling two reprint books: *Sgt. Fury* and *Marvel Tales* (which features Spider-Man).

Other editorial takeovers include: *Star Trek* by Milgrom (from Louise Jones), *Master of Kung Fu* by O'Neil (from Jim Sallicrup) and *Bizarre Adventures* also by O'Neil (from the disbanded magazine department).

When questioned about DeFalco's lack of substantial editing credentials, Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter asserted that De Falco had functioned as the de facto editor at Archie Comics, "for years." Shooter maintained that Archie publisher John L. Goldwater refused to give DeFalco *official* credit for editing the books.

Goldwater could not be reached to comment on Shooter's accusation.

Although conceding that DeFalco's, "not being totally familiar with the Marvel Universe is a problem," Shooter maintained that assistant Mark Gruenwald would help the new editor to avoid any major continuity mishaps.

MAGAZINE DEPT. CLOSED

The Marvel Magazine Department has been permanently disbanded. Both of the remaining black and white magazines will now be handled by editors of the color comics. Louise Jones (editor of both color *Conan* titles) will continue to edit *The Savage Sword of Conan*. Denny O'Neil and his new assistant Ralph Macchio will take over the editorial helm of *Bizarre Adventures* (formerly *Marvel Premiere*).

The assimilation of the Magazine Department by the color comics marks the end of the unique autonomy that the Marvel magazine line has had since it was began in 1973. The original intention of the Marvel magazines was to capitalize on the B & W horror comic magazine format pioneered by Warren. Although the Marvel horror magazines (*Dracula Lives*, *Tales of the Zombie*, *Monsters Unleashed*, *Haunt of Horror*, *Vampire Tales*) were unable to establish them-

selves as solid sellers, the magazine line continued to periodically expand by publishing a wide variety of titles (*Deadly Hands of Kung Fu*, *Plane of the Apes*, *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction etc.*).

The magazine department's separation from the color line fostered a numbered of experiments (one of the most notable being Marvelcolor--which was introduced during Rick Marschall's tenure as the editor of the magazine line) in a constant effort to improve mediocre sales. Although never entirely successful, the department managed to survive numerous cancellations and a number of stormy editorial reigns.

However within the past six months, three of the five magazines titles have been discontinued. When Marvel magazine editor was fired last month, the dicision was made to integrate the magazines with the color comics. Neither *Crazy* (edited by Larry Hama) or *Epic Illustrated* (edited by Archie Goodwin) will be affected by this move.

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X-MEN #160 - ... the introduction of a new X-Man — the magnificently amphibious mutant called *Sillkie!*

GERBER SUIT: TWO MARVEL MOTIONS DENIED

Judge David V. Keyon of the United States District Court of Los Angeles has denied a motion to settle the Howard the Duck copyright infringement lawsuit and another technical motion to have several sections of the complaint thrown out of court. Both motions were made by Marvel's lawyer David S. Engle of the Beverly Hills, California law firm, Engle and Engle.

Engle's first motion on Jan. 12, 1981 argued that the case was not really a copyright dispute, but a contractural disagreement which should be tried in a State Court rather than a Federal Court. Contractural disputes are routinely settled in State Courts.

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Apparently the proposed transfer would have been in Marvel's favor because of a backlog in the State Courts which might have meant a prolonged litigation period as long as five years. The longer litigation would undoubtedly have escalated Gerber's legal expenses and might have strained his ability to continue the legal action against Marvel, Stan Lee and Selluloid Inc. (the producers of a proposed Howard the Duck movie).

Gerber's attorney Henry W. Holmes Jr. argued that the suit was over the ownership of the Howard the Duck character Gerber created, rather than a contractural dispute. Judge Kenyon denied both of Marvel's motions.

Admitting that the denial of both of his motions is a setback, Engle commented that, "the decision would have been different in a New York Court."

Although no official decision had been reached by press time, it is expected that Gerber and Holmes will exercise their right and demand a jury trial.

It is not known at this time if the announcement in the January 19 issue of *The Hollywood*

Reporter of the production of a Howard the Duck movie will have any bearing on the case.

No court date for the actual hearing of the case has been set, but the Gerber side expects that the case will go to court somewhere in the middle of this year. Engle was less definite. While acknowledging that the case would be ready for trial in the summer, he felt that it, "was hard to say" when the case would actually come to court.

HTD MOVIE IN PRODUCTION: GERBER CAUTIONS COMIC PROS

The January 19 issue of *The Hollywood Reporter*, an industry trade paper announced that a *Howard the Duck* major motion picture is being produced by a group calling themselves Howard the Duck Productions. The item went on to say that the movie was budgeted at $8 million and will be written and directed by Dennis Hackin. Neal Dobrofsky was named as the film's producer. Hackin and Dobrofsky's credits include last year's *Bronco Billy* which starred Clint Eastwood.

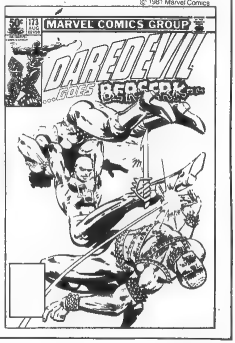
At a recent Marvel Comics press conference, Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter reported

that Selluloid Productions still owned the movie option rights they had purchased from Marvel to the Howard the Duck character. Shooter also mentioned that the proposed film would be a live-action film with Howard being animated like the Yoda character in *The Empire Strikes Back*. Selluloid Productions and three of its executives, Peter Shanaberg, Morrie Eiseman and Peter Coffrin are named as defendents in Steve Gerber's copyright infringement lawsuit.

When contacted by *The Comic Times/Media Showcase*, Gerber refused to comment on the news item in *The Hollywood Reporter*. However Gerber did say that, "If Doug Moench thinks this can't happen to him with Moon Knight, and if Frank Miller thinks this can't happen to him with Elektra, or if anyone else working at either of the comics companies thinks this can't happen to him with the characters he creates, he is sadly mistaken."

NOTES

The new creative team on *Thor* will be Doug Moench, Keith Pollard and Gene Day. No reason was given for the change in creative personnel. The *Tales of Asgard* series will not be continuing on a regular basis although there is one 3 part story, scripted by Ralph Macchio and Mark Gruenwald still to appear....Storm is going to acquire powers rivaling that of Phoenix in a story in *X-Men* 147 entitled "Rogue Storm." Spider Woman and the Dazzler guest star in issue 148 and *X-Men* 149 features the return of Magneto....*Marvel Premiere* has definitely been cancelled with issue 61....Val Mayerik is penciling *Man Thing* 11, the last issue of that title,...Denys Cowan will probably be the new artist on *Master of Kung Fu* when editors Denny O'Neil and Ralph Macchio take over the series.... *Moon Knight* 9 features the return of the Midnight Man and the Bushmaster....Mike Golden has done a cover for *Defenders* 97.... David Anthony Kraft will edit *Ghost Rider* through issue 62.... Terry Austin will only ink the covers for the *Fantastic Four*. John Byrne will write, pencil and ink the strip....Jack Sparling has penciled *Ghost Rider* 59 ....*Savage Sword of Conan* 65 will feature the premiere of a character created by John Buscema: Bront the Barbarian. Buscema has plotted the story and regular Conan writer J.M. DeMatteis will script. The Conan story in that issue is written by Michael Flei-

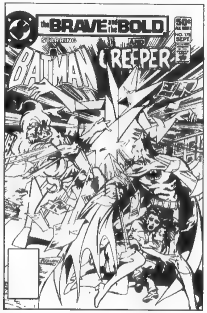


COMIC NEWS

sher and drawn by Gil Kane. *Savage Sword* 66 will feature the Conan story by Ernie Colon which motivated Roy Thomas to request that Colon pencil his new sword and sorcery book at DC....John Byrne is now penciling the *Peter Parker* book....Jim Shooter will not write *Captain America*, although he did plot a story which will be scripted by David Michelinie....The *Francis Brother of the Universe* book sold remarkably well. There is talk of doing another project with the Franciscan Communications Office of New York....A new villain Montenegro is introduced in *Power Man/Iron Fist* 71....Marvel is planning another promotion this summer with the 7-11 national food store chain....Louise Jones is editing the *X-Men* graphic album book by Chris Claremont and Neal Adams. Archie Goodwin may also be editing some of the graphic novels including Jim Starlin's *Dreadstar*, which is based on the *Metamorphosis Odyssey* story being serialized in *Epic Illustrated*....If there is a Spider-Man graphic novel, it will be edited by new Spider-Man editor Tom DeFalco....Steve Bissette is researching and developing the Titan Science Series--a series of "scientific comic books" which Marvel may produce in conjunction with the University of Hollywood (an association of scientists who want their university press to publish a comic book library). The series would be a collection of comics based on the scientific works of a number of the most prestigious scientists who are part of the University of Hollywood. Lynn Graeme was originally assigned to edit the project, which is now being supervised by Jim Shooter....*Bizarre Adventures* 27 will be a horror issue. Issue 28 features a Red Sonja story by Chris Claremont and John Bolton. Bolton has also prepared a cover for that issue. ...Ralph Macchio is writing the *Thor Annual*. He is also preparing a *Captain America* fill-in.■

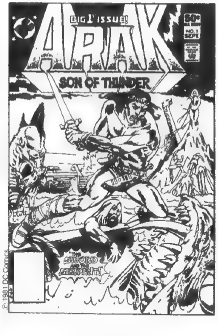
DC COMICS

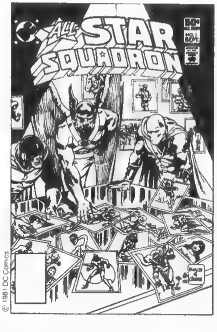
HARRISON RETIRES: KAHN, ORLANDO PROMOTED



Sol Harrison officially retired as President of DC Comics on February 13, 1981. His retirement was announced in a letter from the Chairman of the Board of Warner Publishing, William Sarnoff. In the letter, Sarnoff cited Harrison for his wide and varied contributions to the comic industry over the past five decades. Harrison has been part of the comics industry since its beginnings and did production work on *Famous Funnies* 1, believed by many to be the first comic book ever produced. Apparently Harrison plans to pursue more personal interests such as traveling and painting. Jenette Kahn has now become DC President and Publisher. According to a DC press statement, she will have, "sole responsibility for the company's operations in all areas." In one of her first actions in that capacity, Ms. Kahn promoted Editorial Director Joe Orlando to Vice-President.

Although Sarnoff mentioned in his letter that Harrison will remain available for the next two years on a consulting basis, Kahn, announced that the current DC management team will share Harrison's work load between them. Orlando will now oversee the creative efforts of the company including other media and





licensing projects. Paul Levitz, DC's Manager of Business Affairs, will now be responsible for licensing, circulation and foreign sales. Finally Vice-President Jack Adler will be solely responsible for printing, production and advertising production.

In a move related to Harrison's retirement, Joe Orlando was elected to the position of Vice-President and Secretary of the Comics Magazine Association of America. Harrison resigned from his position as President of the CMA on February 5, 1981, the same day Orlando was elected to his new post.

GENE COLAN JUMPS TO DC

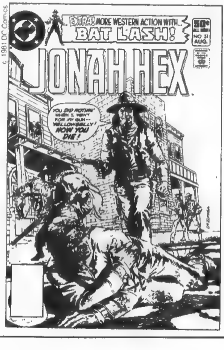
Gene Colan has left Marvel Comics and is now under contract with DC. Although no plans are firm as of this writing, Colan will definitely be doing one of the Batman books for Dick Giordano.

According to Jim Shooter, he, "let Colan out of his contract, because we don't want anyone working for us who isn't happy. Gene felt that he could not deliver what I was asking him to do."

During his fifteen year tenure at Marvel, Colan worked on virtually every Marvel feature. His best remembered work was on the Iron Man series in *Tales of Suspense* and the *Daredevil, The Avengers, Tomb of Dracula* and *Howard the Duck* titles. Although toiling in relative obscurity for most of his career (which began in the early 50's), Colan has recently acquired a sizeable fan following largely due to his work on *Dracula, Howard the Duck*, and Eclipse Enterprises' *Stewart the Rat* (which was also written by Steve Gerber).

Colan's first DC assignment will be penciling a Batman story written by Roy Thomas.

Colan joins other recent Marvel emigres, Thomas, George Perez, Marv Wolfman, Len Wein and Carmine Infantino who have jumped to DC during Jim Shooter's tenure as Marvel editor-in-chief. The move case as a surprise because it was generally known that Colan (who barely survived the sales crash in the late 50's which wiped out a number of comic companies and greatly reduced available work) was quite loyal to Marvel and was extremely reluctant to even consider leaving the economic security that his long stay at Marvel had provided him.



SLIFER: PR & DIRECT SALES

Roger Slifer has been hired to handle sales promotion for DC. He will specifically concentrate on promoting DC projects to the direct sales collectors market. Concindently DC's first marketed direct sale comic, *Madame Xanadu* 1 is now on sale. Slifer who is the publisher of Excalibur Enterprises, will continue to do independent projects in addition to his work at DC.

Andrew Helfer has vacated his position as DC's Public Relations Representative to Slifer. Helfer will now work full-time as Joe Orlando's assistant.

MANAK HIRED, BERGER PROMOTED

Dave Manak is the new editor of *Green Lantern, Ghosts, Secrets of Haunted House* and *Unexpected*, replacing Cary Burkett who resigned for personal reasons. In addition to continuing his freelance writing commitments, Manak will inherit Burkett's other position as Dick Giordano's associate editor.

Karen Berger has been promoted to editorial coordinator. Her duties will now include full supervision of the scheduling of freelancers' time between individual editors and serving as DC's direct contact with the freelance contributors.

NOTES

The new sword and sorcery series created by Roy Thomas for DC will be called *Bloodwolf, Son of Thunder*....John Beatty will be inking George Perez' pencils when he returns to the *Justice League of America* with issue 192. Perez will also be the cover artist for *The Legion of Super Heroes*....Ross Andru will be a sometime cover artist for *Dial 'H' For Hero*....A new supporting character, Lady Jade, (created by Bob Haney and Dick Ayers) is introduced in *The Unknown Soldier* 254. She is described as "the Soldier's most beautiful, mysterious and dangerous lover"....*Captain Fear* by David Michelinie and Walt Simonson begins as a backup series in *Unknown Soldier* 254. Though Michelinie's scripts were originally written for the swashbuckling pirate series when it was appearing in *Adventure* some years back, Simonson drew the stories quite recently.... An upcoming issue of *Ghosts* will feature three Robert Kanigher stories set in the far past, the present and the distant future, which will be tied together by a thematic thread....Captain Strong, the seaman who gets his powers by eating "sauncha" returns to battle the Man of Steel in *Superman* 361.... Plastic Man will appear on a rotating basis with Zatanna and Red Tornado as a backup series in *World's Finest*....The Prankster is returning in an upcoming issue of *Superman* in a story written by Cary Bates....Also returning is the Calculator in the Atom backup story in *Action* 522, written by Bob Rozakis and drawn by Alex Saviuk *and* the Golden Glider in *Flash* 302....*Superman* 362 and 363 will feature "The Fever Plague", a two-part story in which Lois Lane and Lana Lang contract the same virus that killed Ma and Pa Kent....Tom Sciacca has sold his first story to *Ghosts*.. ..ABC-TV has picked up the option on *Dial 'H' For Hero*.....

Steve Gerber will be writing the *Phantom Zone* mini-series reported on last issue.

DIAL 'H' FOR HERO ALTERED

DC's new series *Dial 'H' For Hero* will no longer be restricted to an eight page story format. Editor Len Wein and writer Marv Wolfman plan to open up the book to a broader audience by introducing a wider range of story topics and a greater depth of characterization for the characters featured in those stories. At present a 25 page story and two 12 page stories are being prepared. Also the book will no longer be limited to the artistic contributions of Don Heck and Carmine Infantino. Although no firm committments have yet been made, Ross Andru will definitely draw a number of covers for the book. ■

WILLIAM STOUT

Portfolio

THE PREHISTORIC WORLD OF WILLIAM STOUT — Artist William Stout, currently doing production art on the **Conan The Barbarian** film, has been fascinated with dinosaurs throughout his career. This portfolio, produced in 1977, is becoming harder and harder to find. It contains 10 full-color plates, each one a big 11½" x 14½". Sabre-tooth tiger, Tyranosaurus, and an exotic fantasy cave-woman are among the highlights in this inspired series of illustrations. **The Prehistoric World of William Stout** is a personally signed and numbered limited-edition of 1,100 copies. Supply is limited at the original publisher's price of $25.00.

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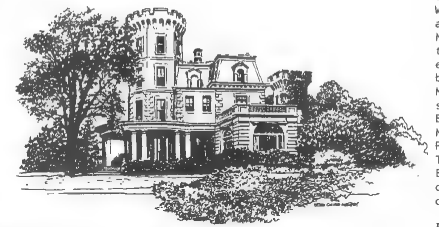


MUSEUM OF CARTOON ART

The Museum of Cartoon Art an exhibit of original artwork by 16 of the artists who currently contribute to *MAD* magazine. Included will be examples of the work of Jack Davis, Mort Drucker, Angelo Torres, Sergio Aragones, Don Martin, George Woodbridge, Paul Coker, Antonio Prohias, Paul Peter Porges, Dave Berg, Harry North, Bob Clarke, Al Jaffee, Jack Richard, Don Edwing and Bob Jones. The exhibit opened on Sunday, March 1 and will continue through Sunday May 31.

The Museum's celebrity guest program has been announced for 1981. Scheduled are Tony Dipretta (creator of *Joe Palooka*)--March 1, Chuck Saxon (*New Yorker* cartoonist)--April 4, Burne Hogarth (*Tarzan, Drago*)--May 2, Chon Day (*New Yorker* cartoonist)--June 6, Bill Hoest (Creator of *Agatha Crumb*)--July 12, Bill Gallo (*New York News* sports cartoonist)--September 6, Paul Szep (*Boston Globe* editorial cartoonist)--October 4 and John Cullen Murphy (the current *Prince Valiant* artist). For more information about the Museum write: Museum of Cartoon Art, Comly Avenue, Port Chester, NY 10573.

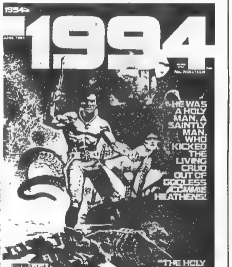
NATIONAL LAMPOON

Upcoming in the March *Lampoon* are two special comic features, "The Return of the Para Medic Man" by Matt Golden and "Young Ron Comics" written by Todd Carroll and Ted Mann and illustrated by Frank Springer. Also in that issue are *Funny Pages* contributions by regulars M.K. Brown, Gerry Cappelle, Ron Barrett, Rick Geary, Rodriguez and B.K. Taylor.

WARREN

Chris Addames is the new editor of *Creepy*, *Eerie* and *Vampirella*. Bill Dubay will still edit *Rook* and *1994*. A Terry Lindall painting will be used for the cover of *Creepy* 127. A selection of Lindall's work (including one painting done for a Warren cover) will be displayed as part of a huge exhibit at the Museum of the Surreal and Fantastique in New York City. The exhibit will also feature work by H.R. Giger, Wayne Barlow, Michael Whelan, Greg Scott, Joseph Smith, Michael Sullivan, B. Schwartzman, Carl Lundgren, Marshall Arisman, G.K. Bellows, Peter Davis and Robert Grossman. The museum is located at 561 Broadway and the exhibit will open on March 4 and extend through May 17.

A new series will debut in *Eerie* 121 written by Bob Morallo and Budd Lewis and drawn by Bob Morallo. The series will concern

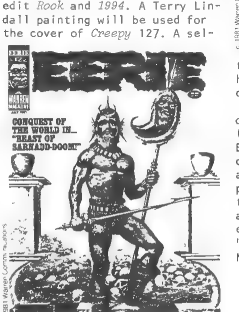

1994
"HE WAS A HOLY MAN, A SAINT? A MAN WHO KICKED THE LIVING CRUD OUT OF GODLESS MARINE HEATHENS!"
"THE HOLY WARRIOR!!"
© 1981 Warren Communications

the struggles of a mutant who is hounded by society as he searches for other mutants.

Upcoming Warren reprint covers of interest include Creepy 128 (Frazetta) and *Eerie* 121 (Vaughn Bode and Basil Gogos)....The second *Mist* story by Don McGregor and Jun Lofamia (which will be printed in its entirety) is entitled "Blood Cycles" and will appear in *Eerie* 121....Val Mayerik has penciled and inked "Wind", a story written by Roger Mckenzie for *Creepy* 127.

* * *

Popular fan artist Alan Jim Hanley was killed in a single



Val Mayerick's interpretation of Don McGregor's *Mist* series to appear in a future issue of *Eerie*.

car accident last Christmas eve. Hanley who was long regarded as one of fandom's best artists is perhaps best known for "Hanley's Comic Book History" (a tongue-in-cheek study of the lesser known Golden Age Comics) and his striking renditions of the Marvel Family. A story of his had recently been accepted by Charlton Comics featuring his funny animal superheroes, The Mighty Buggers, for publication in *Bullseye*. There is a possibility that Dennis Jensen will finish the story. Alan Hanley was 40 years old.

STRIPSCENE

The new *Tarzan* Sunday pages by Archie Goodwin and Gil Kane are no longer being produced. They will be replaced by Burne Hogarth reprints from the mid-40's. The daily strip will continue to reprint *Tarzan* dailies from the 50's.

Barbara Cortland's Romances is a new strip written by Jim Lawrence and drawn by Gray Morrow based upon the hundreds of historical romance novels written by Barbara Cortland. The story line of the strip which is being distributed by United Features Syndicate, can perhaps be best capsulized in Ms. Cortland's own words, "Lovemaking is the nearest we can get to the divine. Everybody knows it and wants it in their hearts. I am the only person who puts it in words."

Goodwin has returned to the *Star Ware* strip which is currently being drawn by Al Williamson....There is a distinct possibility that *Terry and the Pirates* will be revived to capitalize on the upcoming *Terry* movie. If the strip is revived, Joe Kubert will probably write and draw it....Gerry Conway is taking over the scripting of *World's Greatest Superheroes*.... *Ben Swift* is a new strip being syndicated by NEA which focuses on the adventures of a 65 year old retired newspaper editor. The strip is written and drawn by John Lane, an editorial cartoonist who is currently the art director at United Media Enterprises. Also debuting from NEA is *Kit 'n' Carlyle*, a daily one panel gag strip by Larry Wright about Kit and her kitten....Gil Kane will not be doing *The Lone Ranger* strip after all.

ECLIPSE

Among the contents for the second issue of *Eclipse* magazine will be the first installment of the longest Steve Englehart, Marshall Rogers collaboration to date--the revised two part *Madame Xanadu* story which Eclipse bought from Englehart after he pulled the story from DC. The story has been expanded to 60 pages with the addition of 10 new pages. Also in *Eclipse* 2 will be the beginning of Trina Robbins' adaptation of Sax Rohmer's *Dope*, another installment of Ms. Tree by Max Allan Collins and Terry Beatty (in which Ms. Tree begins the search for her husband's killer), a one pager by rock star Ian Lloyd and artist John Holmstrom on life in the recording studio, "Newton the Rabbit"--a funny animal strip written and drawn by Steve Leialoha and a story by Howard Cruse which in *Eclipse* editor Dean Mullaney's words, "exposes right wing politics for what it really is."

Meanwhile, *Eclipse* 1 is at the printers and will be available in the specialty stores by April 1. Added to *Eclipse* after we went to press last month, was a frontispiece by noted paperback book cover artist Don Maitz.

A French edition of *Sabre* 1 has been published by Editions Desse in Paris. There is a great deal of interest about all of the Eclipse books by many French and German publishers.

Paul Gulacy is painting a new cover for the special edition of *Sabre* 1....Jim Starlin's graphic

album book for Eclipse, *The Price* is "on schedule"....Rick Geary has been signed to do a one page strip for *Eclipse* magazine. Hunt Emerson will also do work for *Eclipse*....If an artist for the series can be found in time, *Eclipse* 2 will contain the first installment of Don McGregor's "Kid strip" *Ragamuffins*....By all reports, *Stewart the Rat* is selling well.

KITCHEN SINK

Future projects for *The Spirit* include Will Eisner's interpretation of the Hamlet soliloquy in comic form. The famous soliloquy is being adapted to a more familiar Eisner setting: a man on a tenement rooftop, holding a switchblade and contemplating his fate.

Beginning in *The Spirit* 28 will be a new feature called Comics Laboratory Notebook which will focus on more experimental comic art approaches.

* * *

Fantagraphics is preparing a series of interview/critism publications spotlighting selected comic book series. The first book which is being edited by Peter Sanderson will focus on the new *X-Men* series. The 70 page book will feature interviews with with Chris Claremont, Len Wein, and John Byrne as well as a critical analysis of the series by Sanderson. The current working title for the book is *The X-Men Companion*.

Also being prepared is *The Elfquest Scrapbook* (also a working title) being edited by Dwight Decker. The book is being done with the approval of Richard and Wendy Pini. *The Elfquest Scrapbook* will feature an interview with the Pinis as well as a number of critiques of the series and some rare Wendy Pini artwork.

Both books will be issued in a format similar to Eclipse Enterprises' *Stewart the Rat*. According to Fantagraphics executive editor Gary Groth, the books will be priced between three and five dollars and will "hopefully" be available for the summer conventions.

The Michael Fleisher defamation lawsuit against Fantagraphics Inc., Harlan Ellison and Groth is progressing slowly. Fantagraphics has retained the services of both a New York lawyer and a lawyer in Stamford Connecticuit. It is not yet clear if Ellison's lawyer, Henry W. Holmes Jr. will represent Fantagraphics at the trial. Meanwhile, Fantagraphics has been asking for contributions to a legal defense fund to pay for legal costs.

It is expected that Fleisher will demand a trial by jury. According to Groth the trial will probably be "delayed considerably." Mr. Fleisher was unavailable for comment.

* * *

New from Astral Comics Inc., and publishers Rich Buckler and Tom Sciacca is the first issue of the bi-monthly comic *Galaxia*. Each issue of *Galaxia* will feature one installment of four interrelated series. The four strips are: *The Warlords of Life*--written by Emanuel Colon and Buckler and drawn by Mark Texira, *Blood Wing*--written and penciled by Buckler and inked by Rudy Nebres, *Astron, Star Soldier*--written and drawn by Sciaca and inked by Sam De La Rosa and *God Wulf* written and drawn by Buckler and Stan Timmons. Each installment of the strips will be 8 or 10 pages long and each story will last 3 issues. Current plans include the release of a graphic album book of each series at the end of one year. The color cover for the first issue features a Blood Wing illustration by Rich Buckler and Dick Giordano.

The 48 page black and white comic will retail for $2.50 and will be available in the specialty stores. You may order a a copy for $2.50 & 50¢ postage from: Astral Comics, 109 Monroe Avenue, Third Floor, Staten Island, NY 10301. ■

Portfolio

EERIE VISIONS

by
BOB KELLY

EERIE VISIONS — Ken Kelley. The title **Eerie Visions** conjours up a sense of foreboding imagery, and artist Ken Kelley supplies them in this series of ten full-color paintings. Kelly is noted for his cover art for paperback books, magazines and record albums; and these plates are magnificent examples of his best work. Each of the ten plates are suitable for framing, and are packaged in a handsome yellow folder. **Eerie Visions** is a signed and numbered limited-edition of only 1,100 copies. Each plate measures 11½" x 14½" and is printed on heavy stock A very nice package for only **$25.00.**

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Continued on page 41

all the material typed up so they couldn't refer back to the cartoons. And they had to find characters to play. The director, Cay Michael Patten gave them each identities and a plot line to play (a subtext), and we both kept telling them during rehearsals, "Don't worry about the jokes, don't worry about the laughs. The laughs are there and they'll take care of themselves. You may think this is grim but it's really very funny."

It was a marvellous show and a beautiful production. Cay Patten has just recreated it for **Showtime** on cable TV. We call it **Hold Me!**

GASPER: *It seems to me that that would be a natural for a kind of "live" video television show.*

FEIFFER: What **Hold Me!** did was turn cartoons into theater. So that after a while, the audience stops watching individual sketches. The sketches connect. They build on an escalating emotional scale similar to the emotional scale that one feels in a good play as it develops.

GASPER: *Were you involved very much in the Off-Off Broadway movement during the 60's?*

FEIFFER: No, not at all. I had two plays on: **Little Murders** and **The White House Murder Case**—both at Circle in the Square. But I think of these as peripheral to the action that went on elsewhere. I know some of these people and admire them. But I was not involved.

RINGGENBERG: *Did Alan Arkin direct both those plays?*

FEIFFER: Yes he did. Brilliantly.

GASPER: *Did he direct the* ***Little Murders*** movie?

FEIFFER: Yes he did. Not as brilliantly.

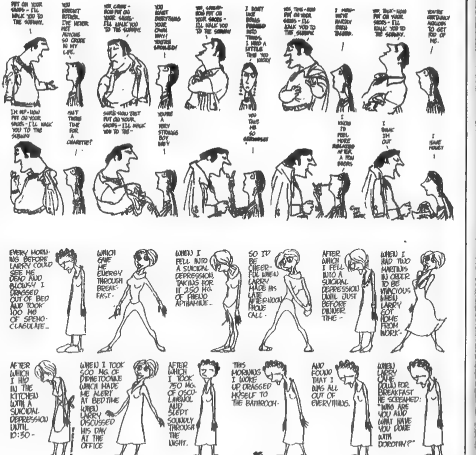
RINGGENBERG: *He was in the movie too.*

FEIFFER: Yes. A very funny performance in which he lost the logic of his character and screwed up a couple of his best lines.

GASPER: *How did you go about adapting* ***Little Murders*** *into a movie? This was a form you hadn't worked in before, except in perhaps* **The Spirit** *strips, which I guess was some form of visual writing.*

FEIFFER: Well it's entirely different . . . . there's nothing in **The Spirit** that really helped. I think that one educates himself for writing for the movies, or rather, the way I educated myself to write movies or plays or comics was simply to grow up with those forms, to have them exist in my life as second nature. It never occurred to me that I couldn't write a screenplay.

In fact, I'm very critical of my work on the **Little Murders** screenplay. Much of it is sloppy and I made too many concessions to old Hollywood conventions. I mean, that was my idea, that was my intention, but it misfired. No, I'm much more pleased with



Carnal Knowledge. I think the last half of the **Little Murders** film works wonderfully. It's where Arkin and I did our best work. I'd better back up . . .Do you want to hear all of this?

GASPER: *Sure.*

FEIFFER: What I was trying to do with the play . . . .and we're talking here about theater as it existed in the early 60's. What happened in commercial Broadway comedies was that a boy would meet a girl and he'd be some kind of oddball and a rebellious presence. The family would be scandalized, there would be lots of jokes about it all around. He'd finally come to his senses in the third act and recognized that home and family and marriage and traditional values were best. So that the audience was titillated by a whiff of rebellion and then cozened back into complacency. And that's what middle class audiences loved to see and saw over and over again. I designed **Little Murders** to operate strictly within that convention. Except when the boy sells out at the end of the second act and the girl who represents all of the traditional homilies (home, family, God, all the right things) embraces him in smug victory and the play is winding down to a happy ending, her head gets blown off. She is assassinated. The 60's begin.

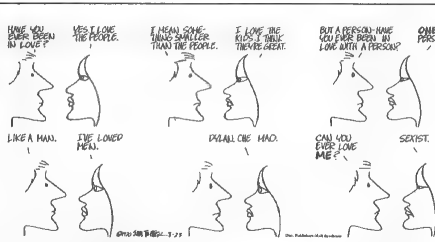
That was the shock of the play. It was also the first time anyone had heard the words "shit" and "masturbation" on the Broadway stage. That shocked Boston audiences.. But Broadway audiences guffawed at the obscenity; they were threatened by the random violence.

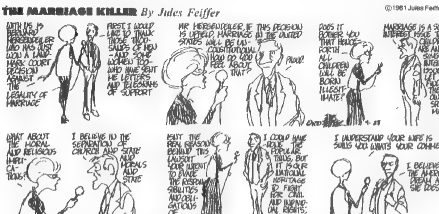
So in the screenplay, I wanted to switch from the stage convention and go to a movie convention. The "meet cute" convention—set up Alfred and Patsy meeting the way one would have in a 40's movie. And to make it visual, I took it out on the streets. Patsy meets Alfred as he's being beaten up by muggers, as he is always being beaten up by muggers. She drives them off and they fall in love. Meet cute.

It should have worked but it didn't.

GASPER: *In* ***Little Murders*** *you detail a gradually emerging urban anarchy in New York by portraying the reduction of the Newquists, a middle class family. You actually show them completely destroyed by the end of the play. Do you believe that our civilization is in a gradual decay?*

FEIFFER: Well (**Laughter**) . . .Just look out on the streets (**Everyone laughs**). Well, you're talking about change and change is brought on by decay. Things have to fall apart before they can be replaced. What I was trying to show in **Little Murders**


HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN LOVE?
YES I LOVE THE PEOPLE.
I MEAN, SOME THING SMALLER THAN THE PEOPLE.
I LOVE THE KIDS. I THINK THEY'RE GREAT.
BUT A PERSON- HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN LOVE WITH A PERSON?
ONE PERSON?
LIKE A MAN.
THE LONER MAN.
DRAW ONE MAN.
CAN YOU EVER LOVE ME?
SEXIST.


THE MARRIAGE KILLER By Jules Feiffer
©1961 Jules Feiffer
BOTH HE & BERNARD ARE HOMOSEXUALS WHO HAS JUST WON A LAWSUIT MAKING COURT DECISION AGAINST THE LEGALITY OF MARRIAGE
FIRST I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THOSE MOONBEAMS OF HOPE WHO GAVE SOME WOMEN TOO-WHO MADE THIS POSSIBLE. THE LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS OF SUPPORT
MR. HERSKOVITZ, IF THIS DECISION IS UPHELD, MARRIAGE AS WE KNOW IT WILL BE OBSOLETE. CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS OR NOT, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?
PHOOEY!
DOES IT BOTHER YOU THAT PEOPLE'LL POINT AT YOU & CHILDREN WILL BE BORN ILLEGITIMATE?
MARRIAGE IS A SIMPLE LEGAL RIGHT TO PROPERTY. IF I WANT TO LIVE WITH A MAN, I HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE WITH HIM. WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK OF OUR SEXUAL HABITS...
WHAT ABOUT THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS?
I BELIEVE IN THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE
WAIT! THE MAN BEHIND THIS ASSAULT HAS THE RIGHT TO DENY THE EXISTENCE OF ABILITIES WHICH HE DOESN'T HAVE
CAN I COUNT YOU AS A PEOPLE'S WITNESS, BUT IN IT PLACE A EMOTIONAL APPEAL TO FIGHT FOR CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS, WHATEVER THE COST
I UNDERSTAND YOUR WIFE IS SUING YOU FOR ALIMONY. YOUR COMMENT?
I BELIEVE IN THE AMERICAN DREAM AND SHE DOESN'T.

Relationships between men and women is, "one of the toughest dynamics to work out." Has Feiffer's vision of the endless struggle changed over the years? Here are four examples, 22 years apart. The final strip is part of a series which could be Feiffer's next cartoon novel

was the violence that comes out of a society that sees itself on the defensive. That violence was unleashed in Viet Nam and countless CIA operations in Latin America and Africa. The play is meant to be a metaphor for all that. We end up firing randomly out windows, destroying innocent people, thinking that they are out to get us, believing that we are the good guys.

As I said in a **Playboy** interview some years ago it was how we moved mindlessly from the movie images of Jimmy Stewart or Gary Cooper as tender hearted good guys to Jimmy Stewart as cynical, relentless Air Force generals and town marshals. Goodbye Mr. Nice Guy. Hello Mr. War Criminal. And no one thought twice about it.

GASPER: *Did the success of* **Little Murders** *give you the courage to try* **Carnal Knowledge** *which was not only your first attempt at an original screenplay but was your first attempt at "serious" dramatic writing?*

FEIFFER: Well, **Little Murders** has more laughs but it's no less serious.

I had wanted to do a sex play for years and was fooling around with it and couldn't quite come to terms with it and finally figured out what I wanted to do. I can't remember the year—it was about '68 or '69. It must have been 1969. I sent it to Mike Nichols to direct as a play. Mike, who always takes a long time to answer, called me up in 24 hours and said, "I love it. I want to do it. But I don't want to do it as a play—I think it's a movie. It's written in short scenes, it already is a screenplay, you won't have to change it." He lied.

Since I basically like movies better than plays—I love writing plays, but I prefer going to the movies—it took me 30 seconds to make a decision, then I worked with Mike on the adaptation and it was an education in how to write a script, how to think through a script.

RINGGENBERG: *How did you know Nichols?*

FEIFFER: Well If you're working in similar veins of humor and satire as all of us were in the late 50's, you get to know each other. One felt like a select member of an underground, whether it was Nichols and **[Elaine]** May, or Second City, or Lenny Bruce, or Mort Sahl. We all got to know each other because the climate at that time was still quite repressive and the sort of work that our humor represented, one didn't find in magazines or novels in those years. It existed in my comic strip and on the floors of nightclubs and cabarets and nowhere else. So we were an underground, saying things no one else was saying. It gave us a great headiness and when we met of course, we felt close to each other.

RINGGENBERG: *One recurring theme in your work seems to be the war between the sexes. You use that in cartoons, in your novels and in your* **Carnal Knowledge** *screenplay. Why do you place so much emphasis on it? Is it to satirize what you see as the American preoccupation with sex or do you regard it as a universal theme?*

FEIFFER: The way I've always answered that question is that I've never seen it as the war between the sexes. I think that's Thurber business, not mine. I've always seen the war as being between ourselves and everyone who is not ourselves. And the reason it turns out to be sexual warfare is that if one lives in a heterosexual universe, the person closest to you, through much of your life is a member of the opposite sex. So, of course there's going to be an awful lot of friction between you getting your way and he or she getting his or her way. But, if you live in a homosexual universe, exactly the same forces are at play—the struggle of wills, the same need to dominate, or the same struggle over controlling that instinct to dominate. So, it's much more complicated than sexual warfare.

What **Carnal Knowledge** was really trying to show—whether it did or not, I don't know—but it was trying to show a society, the society I grew up in and that people of my age grew up in, where heterosexual men were basically groomed to hate women. An age where boys played with boys, up until a certain age when you're told in adolescence, or feel in adolescence, a need for sex and you move toward women—not because they're attractive on personal levels in most cases, but because there's a sexual need. The other part of it, the more gender parts, whatever feelings might emerge along with that sexual need are ridiculed by one's companions in a macho world. So, one had to sit on them entirely. So, we're groomed in many cases to only develop one side of our sexuality—the more aggressive, and more assertive and less tender and less loving side. And that's the world that these characters, played by **[Jack]** Nicholson and **[Art]** Garfunkel came into, and that's the point the film tries to illustrate.

GASPER: **Carnal Knowledge** *is a lot different from* **Feiffer**. *Are you heading in the direction of emulating a more traditional dramatic style?*

FEIFFER: No it seems to me that every play I've done is different than the one just before it. None of that is deliberate—it just seems that each subject determines the style that I work in. **Little Murders** called for a kind of broader farcical treatment. My second play, **God Bless** and the one that followed that, **The White House Murder Case** were really political cartoons and done that way.

© 1967 Avco Embassy

Director Mike Nichols is "brilliantly faithful to the written word and dramatizing the written word." In these two behind-the-scenes publicity stills from *Carnal Knowledge*, Nichols (on the right in both pictures) prepares to shoot two different sections of the party scene where the two men "trained to hate women", Art Garfunkel and Jack Nicholson meet Candice Bergen for the first time.

Carnal Knowledge in order to make the point I wanted to make, couldn't be done as a satire. I didn't want everyone to think that I was overstating. I wanted this to be seen as absolutely right on, absolutely real, that the emotions of the characters in the script (on stage or on film) was true to the emotional makeup of the audience that was watching it. And to do that I had to avoid making it all out wild funny. Since the ideas expressed by the characters are so horrific by the end of the play, I had to understate rather than overstate. So, it's an analytic choice that the writer has to make before engaging himself in the material. How do I make the point I want to make? What's the best way of doing it? Is it broad? Is it subtle? Is it fanciful? Is it funny? Is it only occasionally funny? All of the choices are to be made and in the process, you stumble along and find out things. If you made the right choice in the beginning you find out very fast that it's going to work.

The next play **Knock Knock** was completely different from **Carnal Knowledge**. It was up till then, my only all out Jewish play. It's fanciful, it's done in the form of a fairy tale. It's got magical characters in it and people who appear and disappear. Joan of Arc is a character in it and its got vaudeville schtick in it. So again that's different from the other plays.

The play that is being done next Spring at Robert Brustein's American Repertory Theater at Harvard, **Grownups**, is much more naturalistic. John Madden is directing it.

Another play is opening at the Circle Rep. next season called **A Think Piece** which is surreal. But again the reason it's surreal is because I'm trying to capture a woman's thought process and that involves her memory and that involves . . .

GASPER: *The inner monologue?*

FEIFFER: Dramatizing an inner monologue. Yeah. Then making it dramatic and making it suspenseful. So that things have to happen just as in naturalism, but in some other form. Exactly how that form works I don't know yet because the director (who will be Cay Michael Patten who did **Hold Me!**), she and I haven't decided.

RINGGENBERG: *When did [**Robert**] Evans approach you to write **Popeye**?*

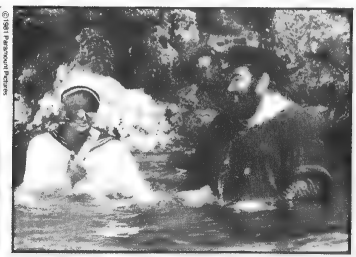
FEIFFER: Damned if I know. It's so long ago—the script has been around for at least 3 or 4 years. I think it's closer to 3 years ago because originally it was supposed to be Dustin Hoffman and Lily Tomlin [**as Popeye and Olive Oyl**].

RINGGENBERG: *Yeah I remember reading that.*

FEIFFER: Yeah. Then Dustin after being in all of the early sessions and loving the first 50 pages of the script, decided that it wasn't at all what he had in mind—from the beginning the approach was wrong and what it needed more than anything else was a new writer. Before we decided on a

© 1981 Paramount Pictures

Two major moments from *Popeye*. Swee pea unable to lie, tells Bluto that he can lead him to Poopdeck Pappy's treasure and father and son, reunited after half a lifetime



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"I think I did better in *Popeye* than any writer has done with [Altman] before. I'd say about 60% of what I wanted was presented."

new writer, we had a rather acrimonious exchange in his suite at the [**Hotel**] Carlyle which made it quite clear that either he was on the picture and that I was off or vice-versa. And Evans to my amazement, chose to support the script. That was quite a brave decision on Evans' part, because when you pick the script over the star, you lose the financing and you probably lose any chance of making the movie.

If not for the wonderful accident of Robin Williams appearing the next season on **Mork and Mindy** and becoming an overnight star, and being so physically right for Popeye, that it made any other choice ridiculous, the picture never would have been made.

RINGGENBERG: *How is working with Altman different from working with Nichols?*

FEIFFER: Nichols is a director whose image comes from the script. The script tells him what he wants to make and he's brilliantly faithful to the written word and dramatizing the written word. Altman is essentially bored by a script. He may need the script to project the images he wants, but he's not satisfied in doing a script as written. He will want to find ways of enhancing it in his own terms and finding other things of interest. So it's an entirely different experience.

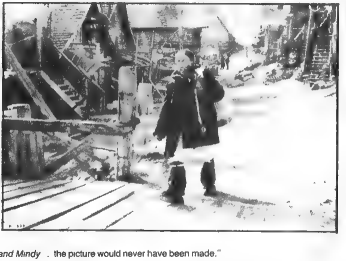
When one goes to work with Altman, you know that you're not going to get your every word on the screen, you just hope that you'll succeed in getting the idea and substance behind the words on the scene. I think that I did better in **Popeye** than any writer has done with him before. I'd say about 60% of what I wanted, the most important part of the script, was presented. Maybe more.

RINGGENBERG: *Were you on the set?*

FEIFFER: I was there for as long as I could stand Malta. Which was three months. Then I fled.

RINGGENBERG: *What did they do to Williams' forearms and legs? Is that makeup?*

FEIFFER: Yeah that's a latex sculpted form, that fits on like gloves, it's applicated. What we wanted to avoid in the movie is the sort of grotesquerie that showed up in the film made of **Li'l Abner**—I don't know 15 or 20 years ago. **Li'l Abner** was done as a Broadway musical and then they made a Hollywood movie out of it. It didn't work at all because that world was not depicted convincingly. They never found the approach to do it. From the beginning, in looking for a director for **Popeye**, we wanted somebody who knew how to translate that world. I could do the script but I had no idea what the hell that world should look like. I mean I didn't have any idea. Altman was the only director we came to, who not only liked the script, but said he knew how to make it. He now says he was lying at the time. [**Much laughter**]



© 1981 Paramount Pictures

"If not for the wonderful accident of Robin Williams appearing the next season on *Mork and Mindy* . the picture would never have been made."

RINGGENBERG: *Was Altman a* **Popeye** *fan before?*

FEIFFER: No. I buried him in Segar and he became a Popeye fan.

GASPER: *You definitely went for the original Segar?*

FEIFFER: Yeah. From the start of my early conversations with Evans and Dick Sylbert (who was in on the film and very important in the early pre-production stages of it) and Altman when he came into it a year or so later, my approach was to Segar them to death. They went out and they got the books and they fell in love with the material as it's impossible not to. Altman had Segar blowups all over Lions gate (the studio), so that whoever worked on the film was educated in Segar's world.

GASPER: *Was it difficult for you to adapt somebody else's work? This is something you had never done before.*

FEIFFER: Not at all, not for a minute. **Knock Knock** had so much trouble getting on (it took three years), then opened to great success and wonderful reviews, moved to Broadway and closed within three months. Nobody came. So that was discouraging.

And it was followed almost immediately by **Hold Me!** which opened to even better reviews than **Knock Knock**, moved to an Off-Broadway theater. And nobody came.

I was terribly angry and bitter about theater and theater audiences. For years I had let myself off the hook by thinking, "Well it's the fucking critics," although I'd mostly been treated generously by the critics.

With the single exception of **The Voice** who viscerally can not approve of anything a colleague does. [**Laughter**] . . . .Except for the **Voice** I've been treated fairly well. But I had allowed myself to put it all on the critics when things didn't work out. But here for the first time I was dealing with open rejection by an audience and felt confused and angry and put upon. Having my own tantrum.

At which point Robert Evans came along, and said, "You want to do **Popeye**?" I thought, Terrific, I don't have to be Feiffer for a while. I can be Segar. I can get inside his body and work in his voice, not mine. And I'm tired of my voice, and they're tired of my voice. And to hell with them and to hell with me and now I can have some fun being Segar.

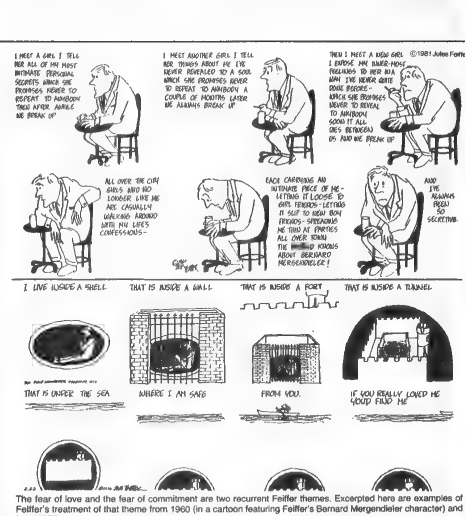
RINGGENBERG: *Was it fun?*

FEIFFER: It was enormous fun. I had no difficulty. First of all, I found it a legitimate extension of myself, from the writer I was in **Knock Knock**—which used lots of knock-down, knock-about comedy, nonsense and magic. Entering Segar's world which was full of magic and full of a civility and graciousness despite the violence, was both easy and remarkable.

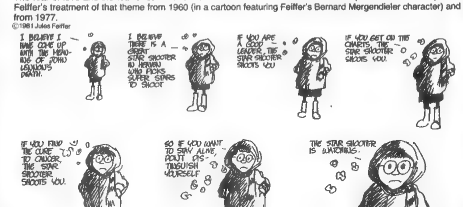
What basically interested me in the character was that Popeye who always went around beating up people, and getting beaten up, was the only moral man in a world full of thieves and villains. And yet as Segar wrote it, it was OK. Very close to the real world and yet not bitter, not vindictive, not self-pitying. It was OK, that's it. You get on with it. You move ahead.

Popeye's basic relationships were abrasive, always feisty, filled with acrimony. And yet underneath it all, there's always affection. Whether it's between him and Olive or between him and his awful villain of a father, Poopdeck Pappy. Real emotion and real caring underneath all that angst and nastiness. And I thought that was truly wonderful. All I wanted to do was be Segar's spokesman and translate that world to the screen and make it work. That's what I was interested in.

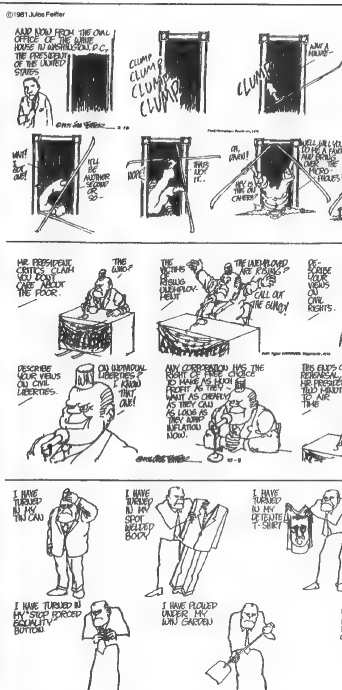
GASPER: *Would you be interested in doing more adaptations, not necessarily of strips, working with other writer's work? Or is this something that is just one of your*


I MEET A GIRL I TELL HER ALL OF MY MOST INTIMATE PERSONAL SECRETS WHICH SHE PROMISES NEVER TO REPEAT TO ANYBODY THEN AFTER AWHILE WE BREAK UP
I MEET ANOTHER GIRL I TELL HER THINGS ABOUT ME I'VE NEVER REVEALED TO A SOUL WHICH SHE PROMISES NEVER TO REPEAT TO ANYBODY A COUPLE OF MONTHS LATER WE ALWAYS BREAK UP
THEN I MEET A NEW GIRL ©1981 Jules Feiffer
I EXPOSE MY INNER-MOST FEELINGS TO HER AND WHY SHE NEVER GETS DONE BEFORE - WHICH SHE PROMISES NEVER TO REVEAL TO ANYBODY GOOD IT ALL GOES BEYOND US AND WE BREAK UP
ALL OVER THE CITY GIRLS WHO NO LONGER LOVE ME ARE CASUALLY WALKING AROUND WITH MY LIFE'S CONFESSIONS -
EACH CARRYING AN INTIMATE PIECE OF ME - LETTING IT LOOSE TO GATE FREEDOM - LETTING IT FALL TO NEW BOY FRIENDS - SPREADING ME THIN AS EMPTIES ALL OVER TOWN
AND I'M ALWAYS BROKE SO SECRETIVE
I LIVE INSIDE A SHELL
THAT IS INSIDE A WALL
THAT IS INSIDE A FORT
THAT IS INSIDE A TUNNEL
THAT IS UNDER THE SEA
WHERE I AM SAFE
FROM YOU.
IF YOU REALLY LOVED ME YOU'D FIND ME

The fear of love and the fear of commitment are two recurrent Feiffer themes. Excerpted here are examples of Feiffer's treatment of that theme from 1960 (in a cartoon featuring Feiffer's Bernard Mergendieler character) and from 1977.
©1981 Jules Feiffer


I BELIEVE I MAKE CLOSE UP WITH THE HEADLESS OF JOHNNY LEVANDIS DEATH.
I BELIEVE THERE IS A GREAT SERVE SHOOTER IN ARKANSAS WHO FINDS SUPER GUNS TO SHOOT
IF YOU ARE A GOOD LOOKER THE SERVE SHOOTER SHOOTS YOU
IF YOU GET OD THE CANCER THE SERVE SHOOTER SHOOTS YOU.
IF YOU TAKE THE CURE TO CANCER, THE SERVE SHOOTER SHOOTS YOU.
SO IF YOU WANT TO SAW ALIVE, BEST OFF THROUGH YOURSELF
THE SERVE SHOOTER IS INVINCIBLE.

An example of the problem of a 6½ week lead time, when one deals with contemporary issues. Obviously Feiffer was affected by the murder of John Lennon on December 8, 1980 and decided to do a strip about it. However that strip did not appear until February 2, 1981.


©1981 Jules Feiffer
AND NOW FROM THE OVAL OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE IN WASHINGTON, D.C. THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.
CLUMP CLUMP CLUMP CLUMP
AND A HOUSE
AND I'VE GOT THOSE (AND) SKYS THROUGH THE ROOF
WHAT? BUT, DAD!
I'LL BE AUTHOR OF "HOW TO..."
BUT... BUT I'M...
OH, EVEN!
WELL, AH, YOU TO HAVE A FOOD IN THE CINEMA?
AH, DAD, I'M A CRIME-WAVE NOVELIST
MY FELLOW AMERICANS, THIS IS A CRIME-WAVE NOVELIST. BUT I WANT TO REASSURE YOU...
MR. PRESIDENT, CRITICS, CLAIM YOU DON'T CARE MUCH ABOUT THE POOR.
THE WORD—
THE VICTIMS SEEM TO BE REALLY OVERHOLY-MEAN!
THE UNDERCLOUD ARE FOUNDS OF THE POOR.
CALL OUT THE GUARD!
OF COURSE I DON'T CARE MUCH ABOUT THE POOR.
I'M FOR THE RIGHTS.
ALWAYS SAVING PEOPLE'S...
DESCRIBE YOUR VIEWS ON CIVIL LIBERTIES.
CIVIL LIBERTIES. I FOUND THAT, DUDE!
ON CONSTITUTIONAL LIBERTIES.
ANY CORRESPONDENCE HAS THE RIGHT TO MAKE AS MUCH MONEY AS THEY COULD AS LONG AS THEY WORKED WITHIN INFLATION! WOW!
THIS GIVES OUR REPRESENTATIVE, MR. PRESIDENT, TWO MINUTES TO ARE TIME
NOW WAIT! BRING ON JIMMY CARTER!
I HAVE TURNED IN MY VAN CAN
I HAVE TURNED IN MY SPOT WELDED BODY
I HAVE TURNED IN MY DETENTE T-SHIRT
I HAVE TURNED IN MY CIA PECANCY METAL
I HAVE TURNED IN MY "STOP RUSSIAN SOLIDITY" BUTTON
I HAVE FLOWED UNDERS MY VAN CAROUSEL
I AM GOOD EX-FORD CRETOOL

Three Feiffer views of the Ford years. Feiffer's relatively long lead time forces him to deal for the most part with less topical and more substantive issues which may mean that his cartoon will hold up over time better than the work of most political cartoonists.

projects in a series?

FEIFFER: Well, I don't know. I didn't know that I would be doing **Popeye** until somebody came up and asked me. Between **Popeye** and **Carnal Knowledge** it's 10 years. The script offers I had in the intervening years didn't interest me.

Immediately after **Popeye**, some independent producers associated with Twentieth Century Fox came to me with another idea—to do an urban political comedy about a young guy who's a fuckup who becomes a mayor of a middle-sized city. I thought that was a terrific way to do a modern political comedy about cities. Now there's never been a comedy or drama or anything about how cities work. About why cities fail. About why they go bankrupt. About how The Fix works in terms of deals made between the banks and the real estate interests, and the brokers and the construction unions and all the other unions and how the city basically is used as a carcass to tear down and rebuild and tear down and rebuild, because that's the way to make jobs and make fortunes.

I thought that that would be fascinating if I could pull it off. And I didn't know if I could pull it off. But within a year of finishing **Popeye**, I'm working on another film. So it really has to do with what comes up and who comes to me with what and whether I find them compatible and whether I can sell them on an idea that wasn't at all what they had in mind.

RINGGENBERG: *In retrospect, it seems like you were the perfect choice to do the screenplay for* **Popeye** *given your own interests and given the fact that you've done so many various kinds of things.*

FEIFFER: Well I thought that was why Evans came to me but in fact he didn't really know my connection with **The Great Comic Book Heroes** or my background.

GASPER: *No?*

FEIFFER: No. As I got the story, he came to me because **Hold Me!** was on the stage at the Westwood Theater in Los Angeles and it took cartoon characters and made them real on stage. Evans and Dick Sylbert talked about it and decided that I was probably the only one who knew how to do that.

GASPER: *Did you feel either of your novels* **Ackroyd** *or* **Harry the Rat with Women** *were successful?*

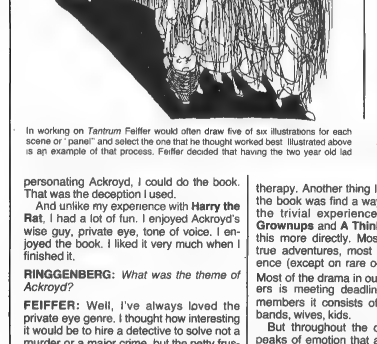
FEIFFER: I don't see myself as a novelist. **Harry the Rat** I liked but I had no pleasure in writing it. It was 2 years of absolute agony, sheer torture. The last time I looked at it (which was almost 10 years ago) I rather enjoyed it. But I didn't like the tightness of the book. Every sentence meant something. It's so spare, it put my teeth on edge. But the book seems to survive and people continually talk about doing it as a movie, and there's been some talk recently about doing it as a musical. It has its audience.

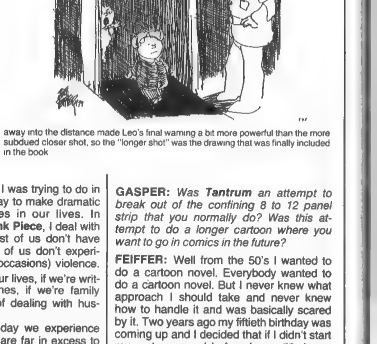
The reason for **Ackroyd** was that for three years I had been trying to get **Knock Knock** on as a play. I'd gone through five producers and met only frustration and rejection. Over and over again plans would be made and they would collapse. The producers who were wildly enthusiastic would say (nine months into their option), "Oh we thought you were going to change this play into a well-made play and that's why we wanted to do it, but we don't want to do the play you wrote."

The frustration was so immense that I realized that I was going to be consumed by this unless I got to work on something else. And I was so angry at the theater, that it was impossible for me to think in terms of another play. So I had no choice but to work on a novel and I thought that the only way I could make it work was to do a dramatic monologue in the form of a novel. So that Ackroyd was on stage and telling a story in his voice, not my voice, telling it from his perspective, not mine. It would be him bringing us into his world, as he sees the characters. So Ackroyd creates the characters and writes the book, not me. By im-

©1981 Jules Feiffer
BOTHERIN, IS OUT THERE. TROUBLE'S IS OUT THERE. IF I WERE 17 YEARS AGE WHAT I'VE LEARNED WITH GREAT SWEAT...
DON'T THINK ME, JUST LISTEN:
FLIRT YOU NOW REGARDING

1. GET THE GRADES BUT DON'T TRUST WHAT THEY TEACH YOU.
2. DON'T TELL THEM WHAT YOU'RE THINKING; THEY'LL USE IT AGAINST YOU. 3. NEVER BE RATIONAL IF YOU WANT TO HAVE YOUR WAY. 4. WHERE LOOKS, IT'LL CRIPPLE YOUR SPIRIT.
5. LOOK OUT FOR ABANDONMENT BY YOUR LOVED ONES.
6. DON'T BE HORNY AFTER MARRIAGE





In working on *Tantrum* Feiffer would often draw five of six illustrations for each scene or "panel" and select the one that he thought worked best. Illustrated above is an example of that process. Feiffer decided that having the two year old lad away into the distance made Leo's final warning a bit more powerful than the more subdued closer shot, so the "longer shot" was the drawing that was finally included in the book

personating Ackroyd, I could do the book. That was the deception I used.

And unlike my experience with **Harry the Rat**, I had a lot of fun. I enjoyed Ackroyd's wise guy, private eye, tone of voice. I enjoyed the book. I liked it very much when I finished it.

RINGGENBERG: *What was the theme of Ackroyd?*

FEIFFER: Well, I've always loved the private eye genre. I thought how interesting it would be to hire a detective to solve not a murder or a major crime, but the petty frustrations and paranoia of one's life. We all suspect at one time or another that everyone is invited to a better party, and "How come I'm not?" Most of us are sensible to recognize this as some kind of paranoia. But, Plante, the central character in **Ackroyd**, hires a detective to expose the conspiracy against him. What the detective is there to do is to find out why, "Everything is going against me," in the eyes of our protagonist.

And he hires a detective instead of an analyst, instead of going into EST or primal therapy. Another thing I was trying to do in the book was find a way to make dramatic the trivial experiences in our lives. In **Grownups** and **A Think Piece**, I deal with this more directly. Most of us don't have true adventures, most of us don't experience (except on rare occasions) violence. Most of the drama in our lives, if we're writers is meeting deadlines, if we're family members it consists of dealing with husbands, wives, kids.

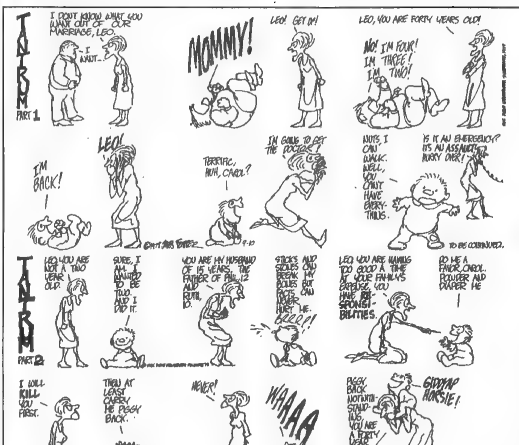
But throughout the day we experience peaks of emotion that are far in excess to the incidents of our lives, the episodes we're dealing with. We use up the emotional intensity of high adventure, of suspense thrillers, of car chases on family disputes over who is going to walk the dog. "If this sonuva' bitch beats me out of a parking space, I'm going to kill him." . . . Just missing a ferry. All the petty bullshit, evokes such internal upheaval in us. I want to see if there's a way of dramatizing that, but keeping it as a dramatization of trivia. Trying to create the suspense of a Hitchcock movie over nothing more than who walks the dog.

GASPER: *Was* ***Tantrum*** *an attempt to break out of the confining 8 to 12 panel strip that you normally do? Was this attempt to do a longer cartoon where you want to go in comics in the future?*

FEIFFER: Well from the 50's I wanted to do a cartoon novel. Everybody wanted to do a cartoon novel. But I never knew what approach I should take and never knew how to handle it and was basically scared by it. Two years ago my fiftieth birthday was coming up and I decided that if I didn't start my cartoon novel before I was 50, I was never going to do it. So at 49 and 9/10, I sat down and started adapting the story of Leo to novel length.

RINGGENBERG: *Did the plot evolve out of the characters?*

FEIFFER: I had originally done a 6 week series in the *Voice*, and for syndication, on Leo. I had such fun with it that I hated giving it up, but didn't know how to take it any further. Then I decided that the way to take it further was to deal with a subject that I hadn't dealt with at all in its earlier incarna-


TANTRUM PART 1
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MAKE OUT OF OUR MARRIAGE, LEO.
I WANT...
MOMMY!
LEO! GET IN!
LEO, YOU ARE FORTY YEARS OLD!
NO! I'M FOUR! I'M THREE! I'M TWO!
I'M BACK!
LEO!
I'M GOING TO GET THE POODLE!
TERRIFIC, MOM, CHILL?
WAITS I CAN WALK. WELL, YOU CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING.
IS IT AN EMERGENCY? IT'S AN ASSAULT-AND-BURRY CHIEF!
TO BE CONTINUED...
TANTRUM PART 2
LEO, YOU ARE NOT A TWO YEAR OLD!
SURE, I AM. I WANTED TO BE TOLD AND I DID IT.
YOU ARE MY HUSBAND OF 16 YEARS, THE FATHER OF PAULA AND BETH, D.
STICKS AND STONES CAN BREAK MY BONES BUT WORDS CAN NEVER, NEVER HURT ME!!!
LEO, YOU ARE HANDS TOO GOOD A TIME OF YOUR FAMILY'S PATIENCE. YOU HAVE NO SPONGE OF RESPONSIBILITIES.
TO ME A FAMILY CHECK, POWER AND DIAPERS. ME
I WILL KILL YOU FIRST.
THEN AT LEAST CAN HE PUSH BACK.
MOVER!
WHAAA
PUSH BACK NOW WITH STONES AND BONES, YOU ARE A TERRY FROM OLD HUSBAND, LEO.
GIDDAP HORSIE!
©1981 Jules Feiffer
TO BE CONTINUED...

The first two strips from the original six week *Tantrum* sequence which appeared in November and December of 1978. In the original story, Leo only dealt with his immediate family as a two year old, but Feiffer took the story further when he did *Tantrum* as a cartoon novel

A few examples of finished drawings that were prepared for *Tantrum* that did not appear in the book for varying reasons.

tion—that is his sexuality. What happens when you're two years old and have the intelligence and lust of a 40 year old man? So that was the springboard, plus getting him out of the house, bringing his parents into it and having him go off on a rather picaresque series of escapades.

GASPER: *Obviously we're from different generations and what you were taught as a child, the values of society that you were given, that you were presented with, have just completely gone askilter. Is* **Tantrum** *a homage to middlease?*

FEIFFER: What I loved about doing the book was that it allowed me for the first time to combine what I know about movies and what I know about plays and put them in a cartoon. I think most of the dialogue in the book has more to so with theater writing than it has to do with strip writing. This is probably arcane to someone who doesn't know my work well, but I write a different kind of dialogue in the strip. This longer form gave me the space to play.

For me the key speech comes after Leo meets a legitimate two year old who beats him up, and to get revenge Leo decides to tell him what the world is really about. **[Laughter]**

He says, "You think you can go around muscling your way through life? Well you've got a lot to learn kid and I'm the one to teach you. Betrayal is out there. Trickiness is out there. If I knew at your age what I've learned with grief since . . .Don't thank me just listen. One: Get the grades, but don't trust what they teach you. Two: Don't tell them what you're thinking, they'll use it against you. Three: Never be rational if you want to have your way. Four: Ignore logic, it'll cripple your spirit. Five: Look out for abandonment by your loved ones. Six: Don't be horny after marriage. Seven: Don't mature. Mature people do the shit work." **[Laughter]**

RINGGENBERG: *I think that was probably one of the meaniest things I've ever read, Leo wising the kid up like that.*

FEIFFER: It's terribly mean. But from the experience of just about everybody my age, it's what we've learned. Now of course this is satire so there are a lot of better things you learn: there's compassion to learn, other more positive things you learn that allow you to live. But those things we know of; they are sentimentalized in movies and novels and TV all the time. The lessons Leo has to teach we hear of less often.

RINGGENBERG: *Do you have any plans to do another cartoon novel?*

FEIFFER: The day I finished **Tantrum**, I wanted to start a new one. I just have not been able to figure out a subject. I spent some time on it. And I have a couple of terrific ideas but nothing that really makes me get down to work.

It's very funny about ideas. I mean the idea I have seemed to me absolutely wonderful, but it wasn't enough to make me sit down and start drawing. And when I finally do do that, it will be something completely different.

GASPER: *Do you regard yourself as a writer first and then a cartoonist?*

FEIFFER: I regard myself as a cartoonist first. Until I'm writing a play or a film and then I'm a writer. But when I'm not actively engaged in writing a script, I label myself as a cartoonist. Cartooning is my basic identity, it's what I've been since I was four and what I feel closest to. When it's thumb sucking time and when I'm demoralized and just want to go to bed for a few days, I want to read comics.

RINGGENBERG: *Your style has gotten sketchier in the last couple of years. I remember that in the early stuff in the 60's, the line was a lot smoother.*

FEIFFER: Well, that has a lot to do with

eliminating the pencil drawings, particularly in the last couple of years. **Tantrum** changed the way I worked entirely. There have been a number of basic changes in the drawing of the strip over the years. Shortly after I began the strip, after experimenting a lot and not being satisfied, I discovered that working with a sharpened dowel stick gave me the kind of line that would reproduce with some quality. I'd use a little wooden dowel, which I'd dip into ink and it gave a bamboo-like, thick line, that I liked very much and couldn't get with a pen. I worked with a wood stick for 10 or more years.

But it got very, very boring. It was very slow. I stopped having fun with it. I started fooling around with various fountain pens and found a Pelliken and started working with that. And as with the stick, I was drawing over pencil sketches which would be fairly detailed, trying to ink loosely so as not to be trapped by the pencil line. After a while that got boring too. So when it came time to do **Tantrum**, I knew that I could never embark on a book that ambitious, if I had to pencil every page. It was just more drawing than I was interested in.

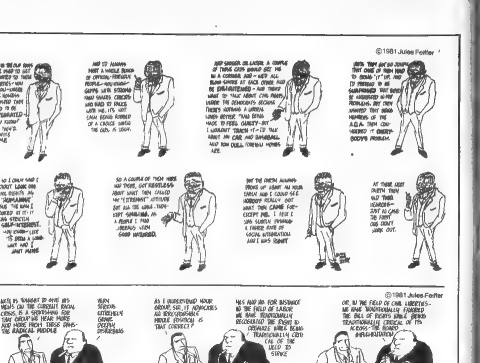
RINGGENBERG: *It would take you too long then?*

FEIFFER: It's not so much the length of time (although that plays into it), it's that it would turn what I hoped to be a pleasure into drudgery. Also, I wanted to make each page in the book an immediate experience for the reader, to hit him right in the eye. And it seemed to me that I couldn't do that any other way, but to draw directly—hit or miss. So I just took some cheap stationary and did the drawings with Pentels and if one out of five worked, that one went into the book and the others were thrown out. I found that it worked. I got high on it: euphoric in a way I never did before with a cartoon.

RINGGENBERG: *Did you find that the characters were talking to you in their voices, in your head as you did it?*

FEIFFER: No, it doesn't work that way. The characters don't talk in different voices. They will speak their lines in their style of dialogue. Sometimes when it's going well, they'll run ahead, so it's almost as if I'm taking dictation from these characters and I have to move faster with them. I start transcribing in some kind of code, some Feiffer version of shorthand, which is illegible to anyone else, and illegible to me two days later.

But as I say, I wanted this immediacy and the drawings in the book satisfied that. But when it came time to get back to the strip, I found I couldn't go back to the pencil stage, because it felt like a prison. So I started using the **Tantrum** technique on the strip—just drawing on little bits of paper and then pasting them into place when I got enough. It often ended up taking considerably longer than the old method, because



The strips excerpted above are from three different *Feiffer* periods. Note the gradual decrease in the amount of dialogue as the strip matures. Feiffer attributes this decrease (which he views as positive) to his working in other mediums (plays, films and novels). He feels that they have served as a literary outlet for his writing and have thus reduced his need to use words in the strip.

this is much more hit or miss, but I found it far more interesting and it has changed the nature of the drawing in a lot of ways. At least it has to me. I think the work is more interesting now, it's got more colors in it. I work a lot more with blacks and intermediate greys—scratchy colors.

GASPER: *In how many papers does **Feiffer** appear?*

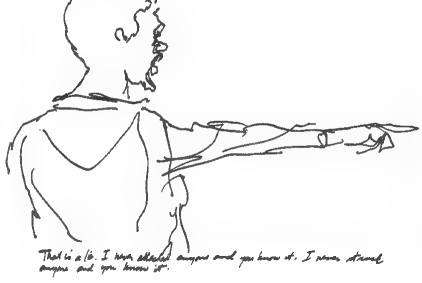
FEIFFER: Something near a 100, not much more, not much less. It's up and down.

GASPER: *Who syndicates it?*

FEIFFER: It was the Field Syndicate. I've just moved over to Universal Press.

GASPER: *How long was the strip running in the **Voice** before the Field Syndicate or somebody else picked it up?*

FEIFFER: Originally a man named Bob Hall who ran what was then called the Hall Syndicate called me after I was doing it for a few years in **The Voice**. He wanted to syndicate me.



©1981 Jules Feiffer

Jules Feiffer's pictorial representation of a fiery exchange between Judge Julius Hoffman and Bobby Seale in the early days of the Chicago Conspiracy trial, before Seale was bound and gagged in "contempt of court." Excerpted from *Pictures at a Prosecution*, which combined Feiffer's court room sketches with an edited version of the trial's transcript.

And I said, "I'm not interested in any of your fink, sellout, syndication stuff Hall, I'm doing pure stuff here and you're not going to coopt me." **[Laughter]**

GASPER: *That was in 1959.*

FEIFFER: And Hall kept coming back, and finally he said, "Look if you're so worried about your precious integrity, why don't you write the contract and I'll sign it." So the son of a bitch mousetrapped me. And I got together with my agent and we wrote a contract which said that no newspaper could change a word I wrote and that I would do only one cartoon a week. Hall read it over quickly and signed it.

GASPER: *How long of a lead time do you have?*

FEIFFER: Well the lead time is a bitch because of one newspaper, **The Boston Globe**, which runs it in its Sunday magazine (which is offset). I have to work on a 6 to 6½ week lead time. Which when you're in politics—it's tough. That was no problem during the war in Viet Nam because I could work on a 10 year deadline and still be topical.

GASPER: *Do you do one a week?*

FEIFFER: No, I do two at a time which leaves me 10 or 12 days to write.

GASPER: *Does working on the strip interfere with your other projects or does working on your other projects interfere with your working on the strip?*

FEIFFER: Well I find what works very well for me is what I call a system of avoidances. So, that when it's time to work on a play, I work on a strip. And when it's time to work on a strip, I get to work on a screenplay. And when it's time to work on a screenplay, I get to work on a play. I never want to do what I'm supposed to do that day and if I have three things going, something always gets done.

GASPER: *Do you still use comics, specifically your work, as an escape valve from the real world?*

FEIFFER: No I don't think I use it as an escape valve from the real world any more. I think I use it as an escape valve into the real world, or as an escape valve to deal with emotions that can't be dealt with in any other way, whether in personal subjects or social subjects or political subjects.

GASPER: *In other words as any writer or any artist would use his work as an extension of himself?*

FEIFFER: Yeah. But because I do a weekly strip, it's more direct. If I'm in a rage over a certain issue all I have to do is get to work and write it and draw it and within a couple of hours that rage has been transformed, transcended. It will seem to me that I have done something about the situation, the problem. It's a joke. I haven't done anything about anything except lose myself.

GASPER: *Do you see* **Feiffer**, *more as an editorial kind of cartoon, or a social cartoon like Thurbar, as opposed to a regular strip like Segar's* **Thimble Theatre**?

FEIFFER: I think of it as a column. I think of it less in a comic strip tradition because there was not anything like that before and there really isn't anything like it since. People have picked up and borrowed some pieces of what I do. But in terms of what I do precisely, there's nothing else around. As far as I'm concerned, it's simply my space to talk to the reader that week about what I'm thinking.

GASPER: *Because of the relatively short lead time, your strips are generally very contemporary in nature. Do you feel that they hold up over time? Does a strip done in 1960 have the same impact and power now as it had then?*

FEIFFER: I have no idea. I don't know. I'll find out, because next year Knopf is putting out a 25 year collection of my stuff, annotated by me. That will be out in early 1982. After that's put together, we'll find out.

I would hope they hold up, because in most of the cartoons, including the political ones, I didn't go after topicality. I went after issues that I felt were substantive, subjects that illustrated something quite rotten at the core of what was going on. I hope that they remain timely, because God knows, the core hasn't changed.

GASPER: *So your material is coming back into print?*

FEIFFER: Yeah. Also Universal Press Syndicate who distribute the feature has its own publishing operation and they want to do a book of strips every year.

GASPER: *I had a helluva time trying to find your strip collections.*

FEIFFER: My publishing history has been one or two printings, go out of print, exist only in libraries, get ripped off from libraries. That's the usual way my books get distributed.

RINGGENBERG: *All the copies I saw in libraries were mutilated.*

FEIFFER: Yeah.

RINGGENBERG: *Do you feel that Reagan is going to provide satirists with as much material as Nixon did?*

FEIFFER: We should be so lucky. [**Laughter**] Oh, I think he'll be infinitely better than Carter, but whether he can rise to the historic heights of Nixon . . . .You didn't have to be a liberal against Nixon. George Will was against Nixon. To be against Reagan and his policies, one will have to develop another kind of politics and that means moving left. And when inflation is not cured and unemployment continues and the economy is in rotten shape and the poor are the ones who suffer . . . .When the might of the military is added to considerably at the expense of public needs . . . . When racial antagonism increases . . . .The country itself will become more politicized. My hope is that positive things will start happening.

GASPER: *Are you afraid that people are becoming more and more accustomed to adhering to a role society gives them in status, looks, attitudes and opinions—rather than to their own feelings?*

FEIFFER: I don't think it was ever any different, we're just more aware of it now. And being more aware of it, it's probably a better thing. It's just being analyzed now for the first time. People always played roles. Before there existed an advertising agency or a television set, But the roles they played were defined by their familes or their church or the structure of the society they lived in. But wasn't that a role? Of course it was.

GASPER: *One recurring theme in Feiffer is a vacuousness between lovers, particularly married couples. Is it that difficult to have a real human relationship in our society or again is this part of that self-examination, or that self-analysis sort of thing?*

FEIFFER: Well I'll be 52 in January and I haven't figured it out yet. I think it's the toughest dynamic to work out, particularly in an unstable society.

If we lived 50 years ago or a 100 years ago, to follow your last question, where roles were strictly defined, there was such a thing as a community, there was such a thing as a church that people lived in and there was such a thing as a **government** people believed in. There was something called right and there was something called wrong. And children remained children and obedient until they went out into the world to form their own families and everybody (exept for a few interesting crackpots) adhered to this. Marriages and relationships operating within that construct, could work or pretend to work. People suppressed the part that didn't work and they played the game, they accepted the codes, and families stayed together. And husbands and wives pretended fealty to each other and in some cases actually felt that way. But they felt that way because of the encouragement of the society or because they happened to luck out . . .or is that luck in? . . . .I know it's not luck up.

But today, with all the brakes off . . . . Where there is no church being held in high standing . . . .Where there is no government of repute anymore . . . .Where there is no social order that is being respected anymore . . . .Where women have quite necessarily, begun to renegotiate and redefine their role . . . .Where men are in absolute confusion about what their role is to be in this changing world . . . .How the fuck are you going to make anything work?

This is a period of very important, very necessary transition, and transition is always a mess. So of course it's going to be a mess. It has to be a mess and it'll be a mess for a long time to come. What comes out of that, there's no way of knowing. But one must hope.

History teaches us that history doesn't teach us anything. Our collective memory in regard to learning lessons from the past lasts about 10 minutes.

GASPER: *I understand you once did a strip for* **The New York Times.** How did this come about and what was the subject matter of the strip?

FEIFFER: This is funny. Maybe I can dig it out for you.

The Times called me I guess, four, five or six years ago. Now I've had any number of problems with **The New York Times** beginning with my father. My father many years ago (he's now dead), said, "I'll only believe you're a real success when you have a comic strip in **The New York Times**." [**Laughter**] I said, "Thanks a lot." Of course the **Times** has never run a comic strip.

Then they started to run art on the Op Ed page, and I got a call from Harrison Salsbury, who was then the Op Ed page editor. I said, "Are you sure you want something from me?" And he said, "Yes we want something from you." I said, "OK. But you know what I do." He said, "Of course." And they sent me an article they planned to run on feminism and I did a strip on the subject.

But I got a call from Harrison who said, "Listen we like what you did very, very much and everybody here really likes it, but we have a little problem with it," And I said, "What's the problem?" He said, "Well you use words, don't you?" And I said, "Yes I use words, I've always used words." And he said, "Well, we have a policy here, we just don't publish words inside the body of a cartoon. Because it's just too much like an orthodox cartoon strip.

And I said, "Well you knew I used words." And he said, "Well, I'm sorry, but it slipped my mind. And you know we tried it out here without the words and we think it works just as well." [**Uproarious Laughter**]

RINGGENBERG: *What was your reaction to that?*

FEIFFER: Well I was so stunned, I disgraced myself by saying, "Let me think about it." [**More laughter**] Because Salsbury is somebody I had great admiration for—I think he's a very good man. He was the first reporter who went to Hanoi and got a lot of flak for it and was considered a traitor, etc. So he's a considerable man. To listen to this nonsense from somebody I had reverence for—it took some time to deal with it all.

Finally I waited a day or so and called up and said, "It needs the words" and Harrison said, "The founder of **The Times**, Adolph Ochs was opposed to cartoons with words, so we can't run this with words." And I said, "Wouldn't Mr. Ochs have been opposed to the sort of liberal columnists you're running today; Tom Wicker, Tony Lewis?" And Harrison said, "Yes, but running cartoons with words is not a fight we're willing to have right now." So they sent it back. And that began my history with **The Times**.

Then when Ford ran and Ford and Reagan were fighting for the Republican nomination . . . .

GASPER: *In 1976.*

FEIFFER: Yeah. They asked me to do another cartoon. This time it was Steve Heller who was their Op Ed page art editor. And Steve called me up and I did a cartoon. It was very tough and political and they ran it. As it turned out they ran it only because it was August and all the important editors were on vacation. [**Laughter**]

When the editors came back, they were shocked. They hated to see it in print and they said that they never would have run it.

So a man named Glenn Collins who was editing the **Sunday Times Magazine** at the time called me up and said that, "**The Times** has never run comics and we would like you to do a Sunday page for the magazine on the comic strip **The New York Times** would run if it ever ran comics." The item was irresistible.

HODGKINS of STATE
DID YOU MAKE EYE CONTACT?
I MAKE HAY-
EYE CONTACT
I HAVE NO INFORMATION ON THAT.
HIS AIDES BROUGHT ME A THIN CUSHION WHICH, WHEN SEATED, WOULD HAVE LEFT THE HEIGHT ADVANTAGE IN HIS FAVOR. I OPTED FOR A CONCILIATORY GESTURE.
LOOK, LEAN
NOT CLOSE. THERE COMMENCED A TUG ON THE FLUSH.
WE ALL CONCEDED I WAS A MORAL GIANT TO FLY IT FOR MYSELF. THE FLUSH MIGHT HAVE BEEN A RUSE TO DECEIVE ME INTO EYE CONTACT.
...YOU HAVE AGREED TO AN AGENDA?
BEST TO BE CANDID. CLAIM BAD FAITH.

The New York Times comic strip as envisioned by Jules Feiffer. In this how large bureaucracies are run, Secretary Times staffers apparently think up

I decided that first of all it can't be a Feiffer strip. Since it was the good, gray **New York Times** it had to be a good, gray boring comic strip. [**Laughter.**] It had to be in traditional form and it had to have rectangular balloons and it had to be very, very square. And it had to be on a very important subject, nothing less than world affairs and the State Department. So I called it **Hodgkins of State**. It was a member of the State Department returning to his office at State—an undersecretary or something. And the whole thing had to do with seating arrangements at a diplomatic conference. And it was meticulously boring. I had a ball with it.

And the comments I got from **Times** staffers: they said, "You've just described the working process of this newspaper." [**Laughter**] "This is what goes on here."

GASPER: *You mentioned before that when you want to escape, one of the things that you do is read comics for a couple of days. Are you familiar with any of the comics done today?*

FEIFFER: Very few of them, very few. The stuff I read is the old stuff, just as I reread old murder mysteries, reread Chandler. I'm aware peripherally of what goes on, but I can't say that I'm a reader or a fan or any of that.

RINGGENBERG: *Is there anybody around who's work you like? I mean anyone new?*

FEIFFER: I don't know that much about it. I really can't say.

GASPER: *I guess you're familiar with* ***Doonesbarry.***

FEIFFER: Oh sure. Strips I'm familiar with, but the stuff in comic books I'm not.

GASPER: *Well let's take strips. Are there any comic strips that you like?*

FEIFFER: Momma I think is a wonderful strip. **Hagar the Horrible** I think is very funny. Mostly though I'm tuned in to the editorial cartoons. People like **[Paul]** Conrad in Los Angeles, **[Paul]** Szep in Boston, **[Tony]** Auth in Philadelphia, **[Doug]** Marlette in Charlotte and **[Mike]** Peters in Dayton.

RINGGENBERG: *What do you think of [Pat]* Oliphant?

FEIFFER: And Oliphant. Some of his politics bother me of course. Much of Oliphant is wonderful, but the way he treated young people in the 60's or the way he treats the woman's movement, I object to it. Just as I object to **[Jeff]** MacNelly's politics, but MacNelly is a brilliant cartoonist.

GASPER: *Do you have any feelings about the underground comics movement? Are you familiar with it?*

FEIFFER: Yeah. But only vaguely. As I see it much of the impetus and initial approach of the underground movement came from **Mad** magazine. That kind of anarchic, wild, (in **Mad**'s case) safely irreverent style. Well I was never a fan of **Mad.**

GASPER: *You mean the Kurtzman issues?*

FEIFFER: No, post-Kurtzman. But Kurtzman is included in this. I was a great admirer of Harvey when he was doing **Hey Look**, his early stuff. But there was never 15 minutes when I thought **Mad** was really good. I know that I'm in a minority on that.

I also know how interesting and important it has been as an influence on the development of people like **[John]** Belushi and **[Dan]** Ackroyd and the whole **Saturday Night** crew. Well for that matter political cartoonists like Marlette, Auth and MacNelly—people I admire—were influenced in their early years by **Mad.** Nonetheless the **Mad** approach I always found to be shotgun, overstated. It couldn't be further away from the approach I appreciate and model myself after—a far quieter, subtler and more precise satiric approach.

So **Mad** was never my cup of tea. So the works that grew out of it, whether **[Robert]** Crumb or the others—while I could appreciate their drawing skills, their vision wasn't a vision that had anything to do with any world that I cared about. In addition, I'm totally puritanical about drugs and the drug culture. Nothing amusing in any of that to me. Also I never had the slightest degree of interest in pornography or obsenity, except as social comment. I simply am not the audience for that kind of work.

Years later seeing the works of other people like **[Gilbert]** Shelton, **[Art]** Spiegelman and a few others who's names slip my mind, I could see a lot of stuff more interesting to me developing out of this. Spiegelman just put out a book called **RAW** which I think is marvellous. As far as I'm concerned **RAW** moves the underground comic into something that approaches a legitimate art form for the first time.

GASPER: *You mentioned Kurtzman and being part of the whole comedy underground: Lenny Bruce, Elaine May and what have you. I was wondering what you thought of* ***Trump, Humbug,*** *and* ***Help****?*

FEIFFER: I like **Trump,** I think I liked **Humbug** better than **Trump.** They tend to be confused in my mind. **Trump** was mostly photographs, wasn't it?

GASPER: *Yeah.*

FEIFFER: Yeah. **Humbug** was the one I liked. Somehow or other that worked for me better than the others. I was very sorry to see that go.

But, Harvey and I had a very important political difference—he always objected to my political cartoons. We discussed this any number of times over the years. Basically he always felt what right did I have to lecture the reader in print? What right do I have to tell the reader my opinions? How do I know I'm right? I've got this form which gives me a certain kind of power and I'm imposing my point of view whether it's on civil rights or Viet Nam or the Bomb or whatever on the reader. And he wasn't talking, I don't think, about the other areas —sexual areas, social areas. But he was talking specifically about politics. I always felt that not only was it my right, but it was my duty, my obligation to do that. So we see things very, very differently.

RINGGENBERG: *So you feel that it's the creative artist's responsibility to educate the population and promote some kind of change in attitudes?*

FEIFFER: Well, it's . . .No, I wouldn't say it's the creative artist's responsibility. I think the creative artist's responsibility is whatever he or she chooses to make it. I mean I can't dictate to you or you or anyone else what work you should be doing. But I know the work I should be doing.

And it came out of a visceral need, not just a political point of view, but a demand of my viscera that I do this kind of work. But I couldn't do it any other way. That to have a successful career, not based on my thought processes and my own analysis of the world as it presented itself to me, would have been no better than being a successful accountant.

RINGGENBERG: *Are comics your favorite medium of expression?*

FEIFFER: I can't say that. I would say that my favorite medium of expression is all of them. I wouldn't trade the experience of doing **Popeye** for anything. It's wonderful to see what you put on paper on a screen 20 feet high.

Or it's wonderful to see a live audience watching live actors, and the drama that goes on—not the script alone, but the dramatic feedback between audience and the actors, that energy that goes back and forth, getting caught up in the drama of the exchange. Nothing can rival that excitement.

And nothing can rival opening **Tantrum** when it was published. And seeing it in print, the excitement of that.

So I'd say that the thrill is equal in all forms and I couldn't choose one over the other. But when I'm not working and I've got to find a label for myself, it's cartoonist.

GASPER: *Do you find that with each distinctive medium; comics, film, novels, plays, that there is a different approach? Does the form force you into different approaches?*

FEIFFER: Absolutely. It's like a chicken and egg thing. The idea itself chooses the form. But the form will then have something to do with the way the idea is handled.

Now there's no way that I could have figured out a way of doing **Tantrum** as a play or as a movie. And people have since wanted to do it as a movie, but I can't figure out how to do it.

RINGGENBERG: *Unless you did it as an animated movie?*

FEIFFER: Sure.

GASPER: *Do you feel that there's a real possibility that we'll be entering another war soon?*

FEIFFER: Yeah sure, there's always a possibility. That possibility has been going on since 1945, so you can't get too depressed about it. Now if there were any logic in world events, we would have been at war with the Soviet Union, at least three times. Thank God there is no logic in world events.

GASPER: *In your view as a social satiricist, is the threat of the Bomb, a reason for the short term nature of our throwaway society? Of our moving from one fad consciosness to another? For the rising divorce rates and for all the social upheaval?*

FEIFFER: I think it's a contributing factor, but no more than the automobile or the age of electronics or television or basically a highly technical industrialized society. Because what we've learned about ourselves as a people enmasse in the years of the Industrial Revolution is that we don't count for much, that we're cogs. And much of the social protest that's gone on and the change in society and the arts has been in reaction to that—in protest against it. And trying to either adjust to it or fight against it or find a way through it. But we no longer feel as we felt once, that we are blessed creatures and individual and count. So that here we live in rather priviledged positions (if one is a member of the middle class) in a highly successful society, whatever

troubles it has today. And yet we find ourselves defenseless. Fragmented, self-pitying, violent, insecure, openly racist, emotionally and institutionally in outer space. We have work lives that don't work...Married lives that don't work... Children's lives that don't work...sex lives that don't work. I mean living in an age of total sexual liberation, as close as any society is ever going to get, we have more books out and television panel shows out about what's wrong with our sex lives. I mean if there weren't anything wrong with our sex lives, Phil Donahue would be looking for a job. **[Laughter]**

GASPER: *And Tom Snyder.*

FEIFFER: And Tom Snyder.

RINGGENBERG: *And Joyce Brothers.*

GASPER: *What do you think you'll be doing in the future? Where do you want to go as an artist? As a writer?*

FEIFFER: I feel as if I'm like Ackroyd, a private eye on a trail. And I'm just sniffing around. The trail leads from one thing to another and as I finish a piece of work, I will discover that I didn't really finish it—I just started something else new. And a new series of thought processes, which will lead to writing a play, a movie, a cartoon. Any of which will take me further along the line that I'm following.

RINGGENBERG: *What kind of advice would you give to aspiring artists and writers? What kind of directions to take their work?*

FEIFFER: Well... **[Pause]** See I think the direction anyone moves in really has to do with how one views his own world, one's own gifts and how one wishes to display them. The question is really, how do you want to live your life? And work is an aspect of that life. I suppose the thing that bothers me about traditional comics, is how little since the time I was a kid, it's attempted to explore areas outside of the immediately gratifying ones. That it tends not to want to deal in more subtle and complicated themes which are there to be had.

I can't accept for a moment the excuse that publishers won't allow better work to be done. Of course publishers won't allow it, publishers don't allow anything. And that's never stopped anything that good. If playwrights were dictated to by producers, there never would have been an Off Broadway or an Off-Off Broadway movement. But what playwrights and what other writers throughout time have done when the establishment has not allowed them to do what they want to do is to invent their own forms, to invent their own circulation. I'm appalled that there are countless fanzine magazines out which deal quite successfully and exhaustively and monotonously in criticism of comics, yet there's almost nothing, very little out in which cartoonists themselves work more seriously in forms other than action, adventure.

RINGGENBERG: *Right. More like a comics novel on a serious theme.*

FEIFFER: And treating it with an eye toward something other than beautiful graphics and layout because what I have seen really tries nothing more than raise comics to the level of a TV movie. And using plots that one might find in a made-for-TV movie.

RINGGENBERG: *Well, I think there have been attempts at serious themes in comics. The very early EC's dealt with race prejudice and things like that.*

FEIFFER: Well except that it deals with racism in the same old violent and cardboard terms. It's really the same old shit with a better conscience. I'm not just talking about the right politics. You have to transfer the right politics into an art form.

My business is entertainment and if I have a message to sell and if I can't sell it as a form of entertainment and can't refine that entertainment into a successful art form, I have no business doing it. But I can't make it propaganda. I can't be a polemicist.

GASPER: *What do you think of the comic fanzine movement?*

FEIFFER: Comic fanzines amuse and arouse me. An awful lot of hard work and decent scholarship go toward piddling ends. I mean, is there anything left of interest to say about the geneologies and intertwining pasts of our super-heroes? They are better researched than James Joyce.

If comic books are ever going to graduate into post-adolescence—and not all should, but some should—if even a small measure of the talent around is going to move into areas that are less predictably sensational, areas that are more fruitful to artists and readers alike, then the good people in the business have to be encouraged. And this is the role of criticism. This is where the fan magazines must come in and help. So open up the super-windows and let the humorless, over-worked, suffocating super-heroes escape into scholarship heaven; let the poor bastards go!

What's required are a few innovative, tough-minded critics who see it as their role to nag, cajole, browbeat, seduce and manipulate a smidgen of comic artists and writers to try for more, risk more.

Clearly this is on the way. Fans made comic books take themselves seriously, if not pretentiously. But the raw material, comics, drones on and on in endless, effortful and mind-numbing violence.

Whatever became of humor? Whatever became of satire? Whatever became of fun? Or wit? Or compassion? Or soft edges? I'm not asking for high-art. Where is the comic hero equivalent of Jim Garner? That sort of charm and wit does not exist, not since the days of **The Spirit**.

Writing is heavy, wordy, earthbound, artless, awful—as if writers are trying to prove they exist, actually exist amidst this muggers paradise of bulging muscles and bursting panels.

Fanzines created fan power, but generally ignore it or fritter it away. Some good, critical writing exists, but it's almost always badly organized and buried in texts about something else. And that's too bad. Critics can't draw, but they can help. Someone has to. ■

COMIC STRIPS AND BOOKS

Baseball Comics 1 (Spring, 1949): assisted on script of the lead story "Rube Rooky", wrote and signed four page backup story, "Sunday Ride of Babe Herman."

Kewpies Comics 1(Spring, 1949): 2 page Clifford strip.

The Spirit June, 1949 through February 18, 1951; July 1951 through July, 1952. (In intensive collaboration with Will Eisner, under the supervision of Eisner. For a more complete and accurate index of Feiffer's contributions refer to *Panels* 1, available for $3.00 postpaid from John Benson, 205 W. 80 Street, #2E, New York, Ny 10024.)

Feiffer (October 24, 1956 to the present)

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Feiffer's Marriage Manual
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Tantrum

SCREENPLAYS

Little Murders
Carnal Knowledge
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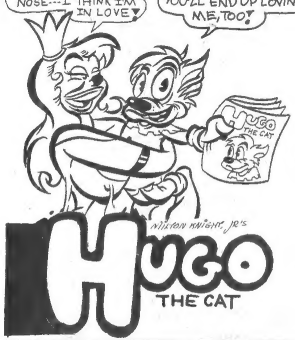
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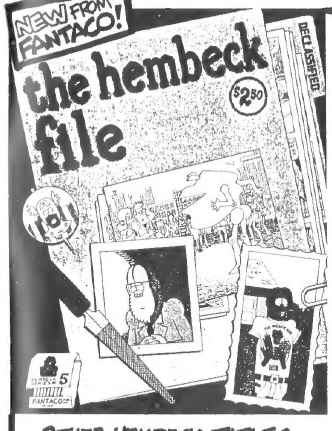

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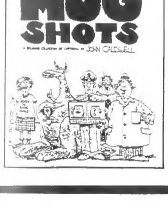

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